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ENGLISH

DRAMATIC LITERATURE

A HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH DRAMATIC LITERATURE

TO THE DEATH OF QUEEN ANNE.

68145

BY

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CHAPTER VI.

THE LATER ELISABETHANS.

Contents of this Chapter.

UNDER the above heading the present chapter will offer some observations on the more remarkable among the dramatists whose literary activity began in the closing years of Queen Elisabeth's reign, and was therefore to some extent contemporary both with that of Shakspere's maturity and with that of Jonson's prime.

George Chapman (1557 or 9–1634).

Among these dramatists the place of honour belongs by something more than the prerogative of age to GEORGE CHAPMAN [1], whose name is a familiar one in the history of our poetic literature. It is difficult to say whether on the whole Chapman's fame as a dramatist has gained or lost from his fame as a translator of Homer. In his own day the glory reflecting from what his contemporaries accounted the highest kind of poetical achievement raised his literary reputation higher perhaps than that of any of his fellow-dramatists. In these latter times, when a well-known economical principle has generally asserted itself even in the domains of art and literature, few authors are wont to excel equally in species of composition so widely apart as those which Chapman attempted. And, on the other hand, there are not many critics ready to acknowledge varied

[1] *The Comedies and Tragedies of George Chapman (with Notes and a Memoir).* 3 vols. London, 1873. (A literal reprint from the old copies.)—A cheap modernised text of Chapman's plays, edited by Mr. R. H. Shepherd, has been published in the present year (1874).—A well-written but by no means exhaustive essay, *Chapman in seinem Verhältniss zu Shakespeare*, was contributed by F. Bodenstedt to the *Jahrbuch*, vol. i (1865).

excellence in the same author, even where it exists; for criticism is quite as much under the influence of its times as productive art. It neither follows, however, that Chapman was eminent as a dramatist because he was eminent as an epic translator, nor that he was incapable of greatness in one branch of the poetic art because he was so successful in another. In such a case a candid judgment will be especially on its guard to

> 'Avoid extremes, and shun the fault of such
> Who still are pleas'd too little or too much;'

and perhaps the time has arrived for judging Chapman fairly as a dramatist, now that both the merits and the shortcomings of his translation of Homer have come to be more thoroughly examined and appreciated.

His life and literary labours.

'Georgius Chapmannus Homeri metaphrastes,' as he is called in the legend of a portrait prefixed to an edition of his *Homer* issued by himself, was, according to the statement there made as to his age, born in 1559,—according to Wood, in 1557. His birthplace seems to have been near Hitchin in Hertfordshire, where he lived for some time[1]. He is stated to have passed two years at Trinity College, Oxford, 'with a contempt,' says Warton, 'of philosophy[2], but in close attention to the Greek and Roman classics.' He is supposed to have completed his studies at Cambridge. It is probable that he afterwards travelled, and the intimate acquaintance with the German language as well as with German manners and usages exhibited in one of his plays has been naturally enough made the basis of a conjecture that he passed several years in Germany[3]. From ten to

[1] See *Memoir*, pp. vi-vii. In his poem of *Euthymiae Raptus, or, The Teares of Peace*, the spirit of Homer recalls his visits to him in his

> 'native air; and on the hill
> Next Hitchin's left hand;'

and William Browne in his *Pastorals* refers to him under the periphrasis of 'the learned Shepheard of faire Hitching hill.'

[2] Wood had said the same thing; but it may be only an *a posteriori* conclusion. At the same time, Chapman's *Caesar and Pompey* seems to show that he had at some time studied metaphysics.

[3] See Elze's Introduction to *Alphonsus Emperor of Germany*, p. 31 of the edition of the play cited below. Elze, however, himself prefers the supposition

twenty years of his life otherwise remain unaccounted for; but it is to be noted that none of his works except the play in question furnishes any indications of his having sojourned in that country.

Chapman's first extant publication (*The Shadow of Night*) bears the date of 1594; his earliest extant play (*The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*) was published four years later. By this time however he was already held in esteem as a writer for the stage; for he is mentioned with praise both as a tragic and as a comic writer in Meres' *Palladis Tamia* (1598). During the next seven years he seems, with the exception of one other comedy, to have written nothing further for the stage, the reason doubtless being that he was occupied with his *Homer*, of which the first division was published in 1598, the remainder at different periods up to 1615. *The Iliads*, when complete, were republished with a dedication to Henry Prince of Wales; *the Odysses* followed.

His Homer.

On the merits or shortcomings of Chapman's *Homer*, by which his name is most widely remembered, this is not the place to enlarge. I will content myself with observing that, after commanding the admiration of many generations, its fame inevitably suffered from the influence of the so-called Augustan school, and from the success of Pope's translation, and as inevitably benefited by the reaction against that influence, which found expression in this instance in the admiration manifested for Chapman by Charles Lamb and Keats. Of more recent critics, none has refused to Chapman's *Homer* the praise due to its vigour and passion, qualities without which Homer can never be worthily reproduced. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the style of Chapman's translation reflects some of the most marked peculiarities of his own literary age; and that these characteristics are precisely such as are most foreign to other Homeric qualities,—above all to those of

that the German element in *Alphonsus* was the result of Chapman's having associated with the retinue of the Elector Palatine, who arrived in London in 1612; and points out that the mask written for the marriage of Frederick and Elisabeth is devoid of the slightest allusion to Germany.

simplicity and directness[1]. It will not be forgotten, in connexion with subsequent remarks on the versification of Chapman, that the metre of his translation is not blank-verse, but a rhymed fourteen-syllable metre, with seven accents.

His theatrical experiences.

Chapman's return to the stage led to one of the most remarkable incidents (already adverted to[2]) in his life and in the annals of the stage. For certain passages in the comedy of *Eastward Hoe* (1605), which he had written conjointly with Marston and Jonson (though Jonson had no share in the passages objected to), he and Marston were imprisoned; and Jonson voluntarily joined them in their confinement. The release of the poets was doubtless in part attributable to the favour which Chapman seems to have enjoyed with the Court. Of his gratitude or loyalty he subsequently gave more than one sign. In 1612 he produced a mask for the marriage of the Princess Elisabeth; while to her brother he, as has been seen, dedicated his *Iliads*. He had other patrons of high rank, to one of whom (Somerset) he remained faithful even in the disgrace which overtook that reckless adventurer. But there is no reason to suspect Chapman of undue 'morigeration' to the great. On the contrary, several passages in his plays attest a candour and an uprightness on questions lying at the root of the politics of his times which do honour to his character as well as his intellect. On a subsequent occasion he seems to have given offence to the French ambassador by a scene introduced into his play of *Byron's Conspiracy* (1608); but in this case the offence is said to have consisted in bringing the Queen of France on the stage and representing her in no very pleasing light[3]. The performance was prohibited, but repeated as soon as the Court had quitted London.

Close of his life.

No other data remain as to Chapman's career except

[1] See Mr. Matthew Arnold's *Lectures on Translating Homer*, pp. 22–29.

[2] Vol. i. p. 505.

[3] She was introduced as rating a lady of her Court, to whom she finally administered a box on the ear. The scene was of course omitted from the printed copy.

his publications, which included translations of several classic poets besides Homer. His tragedy of *Caesar and Pompey* was his last work published in his life-time (1631); in 1634 he died, nearly eighty years of age, and was buried in the churchyard of St. Giles'-in-the-Fields 'near' London, where his friend Inigo Jones erected a monument over his grave.

His personal reputation and character.

In the case of Chapman, scholarship appears to have exerted its traditional influences, instead of its wine being turned to vinegar by any infusion of vanity or jealousy. He seems to have not only been esteemed by patrons of the highest rank and eminence—Bacon was one of their number—but to have enjoyed in an exceptional degree the good-will of his fellow-poets. To speak of dramatists only, Jonson 'loved' Chapman, knew a piece of his *Iliads* by heart, and averred that, next himself, 'only Fletcher and Chapman could make a mask[1].' Marston and Shirley were associated with him as playwrights. Webster speaks of him with what may be described as an excess of enthusiasm; for he seems to place him at the head of contemporary dramatists[2]. This general esteem, in which the younger growth of lovers of letters seems to have shared, was probably due to the dignity of Chapman's character as well as to the reputation which his learning and talents had achieved for him. 'He was,' says Wood, 'a person of most reverend aspect, religious and temperate, qualities rarely meeting in a poet.' And so far as can be judged from the dramatic works which I now proceed to review, the qualities which are said to have made him personally respected and beloved find a faithful reflexion in his literary labours. Their tone is throughout that of a sober self-contained scholar, whose conduct of life seems like them to have aimed at and maintained, in Webster's phrase, a 'full and heightened style.'

[1] *Conversations.* The conjecture that the character of Virgil in *The Poetaster* is intended for Chapman has been noticed, vol. i. p. 565. It has been supposed, I believe, that Shakspere in his LXXXth Sonnet refers to Chapman.

[2] See the well-known passage in the address *To the Reader* prefixed to *Vittoria Corombona.*

Chapman's tragedies: Bussy d'Ambois (pr. 1607) and The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois (pr. 1613).

Among Chapman's works, as furnishing the materials for an estimate of his genius as a dramatist, signal importance has always been justly attached to the two tragedies of *Bussy d'Ambois* and *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* (published respectively in 1607 and 1613; but of the former another edition, 'much corrected and amended by the author before his death,' was issued in 1641). These two plays, though connected in subject, cannot however be regarded as a tragedy in two parts, hardly even in the sense in which this could be said of *Hieronymo* and *The Spanish Tragedy*. *The Revenge*, as will be seen, differs in some respects as to treatment from its predecessor, to the success of which it doubtless owed its origin.

The subjects of both these plays seem to be taken from Thuanus' (De Thou's) *Historiae sui temporis;* but the dramatist has dealt very freely with his scanty materials, which indeed in the case of the second play suggested little more than the starting-point of the action. In the historian Chapman found nothing of importance for his purpose except the character of Bussy d'Ambois, who is there represented as noted for his extraordinary insolence of speech; the statement that de Chambes Count of Monsoreau (the Montsurry of the play) killed Bussy for seducing his wife; and the other statement that a feud ensued between Monsoreau and the slain man's brother-in-law John Monluc Balagny, who was urged on to unforgiving hostility by his wife; but that the quarrel, after enduring nearly nine years, was in the end compromised by order of the King. Of the character of Clermont d'Ambois, the brother of Bussy (who seems also to have borne the name Clermont), I find no traces in De Thou[1].

Historical background of these plays.

The scene of these plays is laid at the Court of Henry III of France, who is himself introduced into the action, together with his brother 'Monsieur'—the Duke of Alençon, and after his brother's accession to the throne Duke of Anjou—and the Duke of Guise, the famous head of the Spanish party and of the League in the Religious Wars.

[1] See *Hist.* lib. lxvii. capp. 8, 9.

An historical background is thus provided not only full of interest for the age to which it recalled events and personages fresh in its remembrance[1], but in itself of the most striking and peculiar kind. It is well known that the government of France under Henry III can only be described by the word chaos. He was probably the worst monarch who has ever dishonoured a crown. Enervated, effeminate, and unable to rouse himself to action except under the dictation of his mother or of his wretched crew of 'minions' who shared the ineffable corruption of his Court, he was a sovereign whom Catholics and Huguenots could at least agree in despising and abhorring. Of him it may be said—as it was said of his elder brother and predecessor, Charles IX, by the brilliant historian[2] who has painted this age in colours of so startling a vividness—that he is a better argument against monarchy than all republican theories. Henry's younger brother, who threw away one of the noblest chances of popular sovereignty which has ever offered itself to a modern prince, and who has left the memory of his title impressed upon one of the most shameless bargains of even this age[3], was to the full as contemptible as the King himself; but France was spared the succession of the youngest wretched member of Catharine de' Medici's wretched brood. Guise was a character of a different stamp; in him was, as is well known, embodied the fanaticism of the League, and he died a martyr to a consistent ambition, while in the whole career of Henry III there was no event which became a prince but his death.

This dark background well suits the action of these tragedies. But it may be worth noting that the character of Henry III is treated by the dramatist with less severity than it seems to deserve even on the basis of the action of the second of these plays, while that of 'Monsieur' is exposed with unsparing severity. It may be that in

[1] In act i. the English Court under Elisabeth is contrasted by Guise with the French. He says of the English that they make

'of their old Queen
An ever-young and most immortal goddess.'

[2] Michelet.

[3] 'La Paix de Monsieur' (1576).

England some regard was still paid to the remembrance of the scheme once entertained by Elisabeth of a marriage with Henry; Alençon had indeed likewise been a suitor for her hand, but never with so protracted an expectation of success. Thus here, as in at least one other earlier drama [1], there is a certain degree of tenderness shown towards the person of the King. It is less explicable that there seems no wish on the part of Chapman to represent Guise, the author as he was thought to be of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, under an execrable aspect.

The reader might therefore have been spared these references to the historical background of these plays, were it not that their author, while not in general attempting any very close historical characterisation, shows himself fully aware of the true significance of the realities which cast their lurid glare across his mimic scene. A strong historical sense, if I may use the expression, is so rare in even the greatest of our Elisabethan dramatists, that it is all the more noteworthy to find Chapman thoughtfully sounding the depths of the movements from the consequences of which his age was still trembling. There are passages in these plays which go to the very bottom of the dark waters from which France had recently emerged, and which might have taught the age of James I lessons sorely needed by it. Chapman was no political seer; but he understood the meaning of history; he perceived the real difference between despotism and the rule of law; he could tell the truth to Kings who 'strained past right, for their right [2],' and could remind freemen that 'who breaks no Law is subject to no King [3].'

Bussy d'Ambois.

But this is merely one of the aspects under which these tragedies have to be considered. Bussy d'Ambois, the hero of the earlier of them, is a vigorous child of nature, nobly-born, but with no fortune except such as his own strength of character and his sword may carve out for him. Intro-

[1] Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*. Cf. vol. i. p. 192.

[2] See the whole of the admirable passage in *The Revenge* (act iv) beginning 'What change is here?'

[3] *Ib.*, near the close of the act.

duced to Court by Monsieur, who intends to use him as an instrument, and by his aid to gain the throne [1], he raises himself to an independent position of power. He cares neither for the Guise nor for Monsieur, who accordingly combine to effect his ruin. This they accomplish by revealing to the Count of Montsurry Bussy's love for his wife Tamyra. Bussy has access to her chamber by a subterraneous passage known only to himself and a Friar who has served him as guide to the Countess. The Friar is first slain; and though his ghost appears to warn the lovers, the Count, by sending a letter which he has forced his miserable wife to write in her blood, and by himself assuming the Friar's habit, deludes Bussy into disbelief in the ghost. He seeks a last interview with the lady, is met by the husband, and though in a combat he 'hath Montsurry down,' is killed by pistol-shots fired by the hirelings of his other enemies. Montsurry seems to forgive his wife, though turning away from her for ever.

This strange plot is carried out with thorough effectiveness. The character of Bussy is most vigorously—at times rather coarsely—drawn [2]; and the scene *e.g.* in which Monsieur requests his true opinion of his would-be patron, after encouraging him by a frank statement of his own opinion of Bussy himself, is written with genuine power. Tamyra is another character of passionate intensity, in whose speeches there are touches of the knowledge of woman's nature which I have no hesitation in ascribing to Chapman [3].

[1] 'There is no second place in numerous State
That holds more than a Cypher.' (Act i.)

[2] How excellent is the simile applied to him (act i):

'D'Ambois (that like a Laurel put in fire
Sparkled and spit).'

[3] These lines are very beautiful in expression:

'Before I was secure against death and hell;
But now am subject to the heartless fear
Of every shadow, and of every breath,
And would change firmness with an aspen leaf;
So confident a spotless conscience is;
So weak a guilty.' (Act iii.)

But though some of the other characters might be dwelt upon with like praise, it is in the diction that the most characteristic feature of this play is to be sought. Here as in *The Revenge*—but not as in *The Revenge* degenerating into prolixity—will be observed Chapman's love of similes and metaphors, frequently of a very original, and generally of a very felicitous kind. His learning was very great and very wide; but he is equally ready to associate his ideas with objects of nature and of daily life. One is reminded of the conceits of Cowley and the Fantastic School, and of the scientific similes in which a great living writer is prone to indulge[1]. At the same time the finish and beauty of the versification are as remarkable as the vigour of the diction; and though opportunities for bombast abounded, it is only in two passages at the close of the play that I have observed any example of it[2].

The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois.

The same remarks apply to *The Revenge;* but here the conception of the main character leads the author

[1] A few examples must suffice:

'A worthy man should imitate the weather
That sings in tempests; and being clear is silent.' (Act iv.)

'The stony birth of clouds will touch no laurel,
Nor any sleeper.' (Act v.)

'The errant wilderness of a woman's face:
Where men cannot get out, for all the Comets
That have been lighted at it; though they know
That adders lie a sunning in their smiles,' &c. (Act v);

and the odd simile of the candle at the close of the play. So again in *The Revenge*, the simile of the rainbow (act ii), and this passage (act i), which reads like a paraphrased opening of a chapter of *Middlemarch:*

'But as geometricians . . .
Teach that no lines, nor superficies
Do move themselves, but still accompany
The motions of their bodies: so poor wives
Must not pursue, nor have their own affections
But to their husbands' earnests,' &c.

[2] Dryden however, who (in his Epistle Dedicatory to *The Spanish Fryar*) says that he has 'indignation enough to burn a D'Ambois annually to the memory of Jonson,' seems to me to judge the play very unjustly as a bombastic work. D'Urfey too, who adapted the play in 1691, speaks of its 'intolerable Fustian.' See Memoir in Chapman's *Works*, pp. xvi–xviii, and cf. as to D'Urfey's adaptation, Geneste, ii. 9 *seqq.* Geneste says that D'Urfey 'very properly' turned the Friar into an old female, and made Tamyra kill herself.

to a constant indulgence in passages of reflexion, which necessarily often have a rhetorical character. Bussy's brother Clermont is the hero of the play—a character totally different from that of the other brother[1]. He is a 'Senecal man,' a philosopher who contemns the minions by whom he is surrounded. Yet he is not the less brave because he can 'contain' his 'fire, as hid in embers.' He adheres with loyal fidelity to his patron Guise, after whose death he commits suicide in the spirit of a true Stoic. His wisdom he illustrates abundantly by paradoxical reflexions of his own, as well as by quotations from the ancients—Sophocles in particular, whose *Antigone* he seems to have read to good purpose[2]. The action of the piece is indicated by its title. Bussy's brother-in-law, the mean-spirited Baligny, is in vain urged by his wife to avenge her brother's death; which Tamyra also, Montsurry's wife, has not forgotten. Instead of doing his duty, Baligny persuades the King to order the apprehension of Clermont as a friend of Guise; and the proceedings by which this scheme is accomplished are rather lengthily drawn out. On his release Clermont is himself urged to perform the deed by the ghost of Bussy; and in a powerfully-written scene he engages Montsurry in single combat, his sister appearing in disguise to take his place should it prove requisite. Meanwhile Guise has been murdered; Monsieur has died; and thus a whole array of ghosts (including that of 'Shattilin' in memory of the St. Bartholomew) are introduced before the close, which is brought about by Clermont's suicide. Thus the construction of *The Revenge* is not of a very symmetrical character; and the merits of this play are, more exclusively than those of the earlier tragedy, merits of diction. Notwithstanding the eloquent philosophy of Clermont, I should however be decidedly

[1] They are well contrasted by a scene corresponding to that in which Monsieur had sought Bussy's genuine opinion of himself. Clermont is asked the same question; and manages to convey the same answer, but after a very different fashion.

[2] Act ii. The eloquent passage (act i) on the respect due to the Stage, when pursuing its true ends, should be noticed, though, as Clermont's interlocutor observes, it be only a 'virtuous digression.'

inclined to give the preference to the earlier of these two remarkable tragedies. In the Preface to *The Revenge* 'material instruction, elegant and sententious excitation to Virtue, and deflexion from her contrary' are described by Chapman as 'the soul, limbs and limits of an authentical tragedy;' and with these lofty aims in view, he certainly produced two works of singular power, and in parts of high poetic merit.

The Conspiracy and The Tragedy of Byron (fr. 1608).

The Conspiracie, and Tragedie of Charles Duke of Byron, Marshall of France (printed 1608) are two plays, which unlike the two preceding, may be regarded as merely forming a single whole. Their subject is one of much greater interest than that of Bussy d'Ambois; and the event which forms their catastrophe being fresh within men's memories—the execution of Biron took place in 1602—the plays could hardly fail to attract much attention[1]. Henry IV of France was still reigning when they were produced, so that they are among the few Elisabethan dramas we possess relating to what may be called contemporary historical events. It has already been stated that their performance was prohibited by desire of the French ambassador, either as it is said on account of indiscretions committed in passages not remaining in the printed copies, or perhaps because of the ambassador's natural objection to the production of his royal master in person on the stage, under however favourable a light. In his protest the ambassador was probably merely urging the explication of the ordinance prohibiting the representation of any 'modern Christian king' on the stage[2].

The conspiracy of Biron, its discovery, and the treatment by the King of the culprit form one of the most striking episodes in the reign of the good King Henry. De Thou's narrative of the King's attempt to induce the haughty marshal to confess his guilt and thus give him an opportunity of exercising mercy, bears a certain resemblance to Seneca's well-known story of the interview between

[1] They seem alluded to in Dekker's *Northward Hoe*, act iv.

[2] Cf. the remarks in connexion with Middleton's *Game of Chess*, below.

Augustus and Cinna, which was so effectively dramatised by Corneille. But the result was the opposite one; for Biron, unlike Cinna, refused to confess, and the magnanimous prince was thus unable to save him from his doom. De Thou likewise tells the anecdote of Queen Elisabeth's warning to Biron at the time of his English embassy; and his brief relation is far more dramatic than the long narrative (occupying a whole act of the *Conspiracy*) in which Chapman reproduces the dialogues held with Biron at the English Court[1].

The historical episode of the fall of Biron is expanded by Chapman into two plays which, though possessing many merits, cannot be ranked for dramatic vigour and effectiveness with his two plays on the story of *Bussy d'Ambois*. There is not enough of progress in the action to justify its being spread over two parts; nor is the figure of the hero sufficiently interesting to warrant so wide a canvas. The one note of his character is overbearing arrogance; and there is hardly any variation in the way in which this quality is displayed till quite at the close, when, with some dramatic force, the bearing of the doomed and baffled schemer is made to teach the moral, how

> 'Strength to aspire is still accompanied
> With weakness to endure[2].'

[1] Act iv, where Crequi gives d'Aumont an account of the Marshal's visit to the English Court. Here, though a long speech by Elisabeth is recited by the narrator, the warning proceeds not from the Queen but from

> 'a Councillor
> Of great and eminent name, and matchless merit,'—

not otherwise identified. In De Thou (*Hist.* lib. cxxvi. cap. 6) the Queen points out to Biron in the Tower 'Essexii caput' and expresses her opinion that King Henry IV should adopt the same wholesome way of exhibiting the consequences of treason. She begs Biron to recommend his master not to be merciful, and adds, 'Quantum ad me attinet, nunquam misericordiâ eorum tangar, qui pacem publicam conturbant.'—It is by the bye an extraordinary example of carelessness that the editor of the reprint of Chapman (*Memoir*, p. xxii) should consider these plays 'remarkable as introducing our own Queen Elisabeth upon the scene,' when in fact Chapman on this head observed the same caution, though not for the same reason, as Mr. Puff in *The Critic*.—The discovery of Biron's designs and his execution are told at length by De Thou in lib. cxxviii. capp. 3–8 of his *Historiae*.

[2] *Tragedy*; act iv *ad fin.* 'Never,' says the Chancellor, 'saw I man of such a spirit so *amaz'd* at death.'

No sympathy can be felt for so continuous an exhibition of self-esteem; and—as was under the circumstances unavoidable—the 'glorious' Marshal's exaltation of his own merits occasionally breaks forth into unmistakeable rant. Little power of characterisation is displayed in the other personages of these plays. The easy and self-controlled dignity of the King is, however, very pleasingly and successfully depicted, while in the *Conspiracy* there is some vigour as well as vivacity in the character of the politic Duke of Savoy, who first involves the hero in the meshes of treasonable intrigue. The villainous Lafin, whose double treachery finally ruins the Marshal, is a commonplace intriguer; and there is no other character of interest. Some of the scenes are effective—as that with the astrologer from whom the eager enquirer cannot bear to hear a truthful forecast of his fate[1], his interview with the King at the close of the earlier play, and the final scene of the *Tragedy*. But the chief merit of the work lies in individual passages rather than in the general conduct of its dramatic action.

These works furnished Chapman with opportunities for a full display of his epical and rhetorical powers, both of which are of a high order. But narrative passages (such as those in the scene between Savoy and the King in act ii. of the *Conspiracy*), and admirably written speeches of great length (such as those of Cupid in the Mask in act i. of the *Tragedy*, and those in act iv. of the *Conspiracy* already referred to), when so unsparingly introduced as they are in these plays, fatally clog dramatic action. Chapman however seems to have determined to spare neither the breath of his actors nor the patience of his hearers; and grows more and more lengthy as the action proceeds, until at length (as the Chancellor says, for 'shortnesse sake') the five principal charges against the Marshal and his five answers are set forth. Thus 'a liberal sufferance of' the author's 'speech' becomes at times barely possible.

Ingenious and often most felicitous similes and meta-

[1] *Conspiracy*, act iii.

phors of the kind already noticed in *Bussy d'Ambois* again abound. But these ornaments are here less remarkable for poetic power and grace, and exhibit, it must be allowed, too much of what King Henry humorously calls (in Savoy)

> 'wit of the true Pierian spring
> That can make any thing of any thing[1].'

And the author appears too anxious to introduce illustrations of his own learning, which is indeed sufficiently various to be instructive even to the modern reader, but which is more in place on the lips of Elisabeth and her councillors than on those of the plain-spoken Henry and his Court. The fluent grace of the versification remains however unaffected by any of these elaborate efforts; and there are passages of true poetic beauty[2] to set against others fairly amenable to the charge of bombast.

Caesar and Pompey (pr. 1631).

Caesar and Pompey (printed 1631; from the dedication to the Earl of Middlesex, a statesman whose career was no signal exemplification of Roman virtue, it appears that the play had been written 'long since,' and was never acted) announces itself as a Roman tragedy, out of the events represented in which 'is evicted this Proposition, *Only a just man is a freeman.*' This maxim, which is no commonplace in Chapman's mouth—for he had a true understanding, nourished by his Classical lore, of the real dignity of free civic life—finds its positive exemplification in Cato, with whose death the play closes. The last act, both as developing Cato's philosophy and as exhibiting with some dramatic force the anxieties of Pompey's wife Cornelia and

[1] *Conspiracy*, act ii. Thus, a simile (*Conspiracy*, act iii), beginning with a fine poetic image, is, in order to give the idea an artificial completeness, made part of a painfully clever conceit, and Biron says of himself and the King:

> 'My spirit as yet, but stooping to his rest,
> Shines hotly in him, *as the Sun in clouds,*
> *Purpled, and made proud with a peaceful Even:*
> But when I throughly set to him, his cheeks
> Will (like those clouds) forego their colour quite,
> And his whole blaze smoke into endless night.'

[2] *e.g.* Biron's speech (near the end of the *Conspiracy*) beginning

> 'O innocence, the sacred amulet.'

her brief recovery of the husband whom she is to lose for ever, seems to me superior in execution to the rest of the play[1], which is by no means on the level of Chapman's best works, even in beauty of versification. His genius was in a tame mood, though occupied with what ought to have been a theme befitting his powers, when he wrote this tragedy. The display of classical learning is far slighter than what might have been expected; but while this abstinence is by no means unwelcome, the looseness of the construction—which is epical rather than dramatic—and the absence of any attempt at characterisation leave the tragedy devoid of dramatic interest. To make Caesar fight the battle of Pharsalus only because of the good omens which he has received, is hardly a powerful thought; indeed the view of Caesar as a 'fortunate' man is throughout too strongly urged, when in truth it was his rival who before the closing part of his career was so pre-eminently a debtor to good-luck. Remarkable in the main neither for historic insight, nor for eloquence, nor even for an arduous application of learning, this *Caesar and Pompey* deserves only a passing notice[2].

[1] Act v. plays partly at Utica, partly at Lesbos—

> 'compass'd in
> With the Aegean sea, that doth divide
> Europe from Asia,—the sweet literate world
> From the barbarian.'

Here, in a very effective scene, Cornelia and her attendants await the coming of Pompey as victor; and do not recognise him, when he arrives with a single friend, disguised in black robe and broad hat—a rather Puritanical version of a 'Thessalian augur.'—I can see no sign that Addison when he wrote his *Cato* was acquainted with Chapman's play.

[2] There is some vigour in the first scene of all, where Pompeius and Caesar meet in the Senate with Cato, and where part of the debate about the Calilinarian prisoners is anachronistically introduced. The episode of Fronto, the ruined rascal who summons up Ophioneus (a classical Lucifer, according to his own explanation of himself, from 'the old stoic Pherecydes'), is I suppose Chapman's own invention, and leads to nothing. The diction is generally free from anachronisms, though Pompey's reference to Irish boys and Ophioneus' advice to Fronto to 'drink with the Dutchman, swear with the Frenchman, cheat with the Englishman, buy with the Scot, and turn all this to Religion,' occur as pardonable licences. Pompey commits an ingenious misquotation in saying he would rather err with *Cato*, 'than with the truth go of the world besides.' It is by the bye a curious choice of phrase that Caesar should more than once be said to be aiming at the place of 'universal bishop.'

Alphonsus Emperor of Germany (pr. 1654).

The tragedy of *Alphonsus Emperour of Germany* was not printed till after Chapman's death (in 1654). Reference has already been made to the peculiar feature which distinguishes this play. As Elze[1] observes, the knowledge of German manners and customs (though not invariably correct), and of the German language, of which it gives evidence, cannot be explained except on one of two hypotheses. Either Chapman had at some time of his life visited Germany and mastered its language, or he was assisted by a German writer in the composition of the tragedy. I should with Elze incline to the latter hypothesis, and indeed should be willing to go further, and suppose it possible that the body of the play as well as the passages in German were furnished by some German writer. For not only is the dialogue in general full of German phrases, but the whole of the play gives the impression of having been revised rather than composed by Chapman. It is quite unworthy of him in every respect, though there are indications of his hand in the frequent classical allusions and in the generally superior manner of the last act.

The tragedy of *Alphonsus* is in any case a very indifferent piece of handiwork. Its subject is the contention between Richard of Cornwall and Alfonso of Castile for the crown of the Roman Empire, in the period of the *Interregnum* which preceded the election of Rudolf of Habsburg. The events and characters with which the action of the drama is concerned are treated after a fashion amounting, it is needless to say, to a singularly gross perversion of history. Thus, to speak of the chief personage of the play only, the real Alphonsus never came to Germany at all, and seems to have been a very inoffensive personage. In the play he is made a villain of the deepest dye. He begins by murdering his secretary, in order to be rid of the confidant of his evil policy, and then persuades his victim's son that the act was committed by order of the Electors. This son, Alexander, is hereupon instigated by the Emperor to poison

[1] Dr. Karl Elze's edition of *Alphonsus* (Leipzig, 1867) contains, besides its valuable Introduction, some interesting notes explaining various passages in the play.

those of the Electors who are adverse to his interests. He is next induced by Alphonsus to dishonour the Saxon princess, the newly-married bride of Prince Edward, the nephew of his English rival Richard. Finally the villainous Emperor is destroyed by the instrument of his own malice. For when the battle between the rival forces has been decided in Alphonsus' favour, Alexander, in order to induce the tyrant to kill his wife (Richard's sister) and Prince Edward, who are in his custody, brings the false news of defeat. In dastardly despair, Alphonsus now reveals himself to Alexander as the real murderer of his father, and meets with the punishment of death at the hands of the son. This outline by no means exhausts the horrors of the play, which are intermixed with some extremely doubtful fun,—consisting in the device of making the Saxon princess, as well as two 'bowrs' who are suborned to assassinate Richard, talk German.

This device, which is employed for more equivocal purposes than that of producing a laugh at the sound of a foreign 'lingo,' is of course by no means peculiar to this play; but it is nowhere employed in so elaborate a fashion. Shakspere's Princess Katharine can only speak French; in Dekker's *Shoemakers' Holiday* the hero assumes the disguise and the tongue of a Fleming; and other instances might be cited for the introduction of a character speaking a foreign language. The peculiarity of Princess 'Hedewick's' and the 'bowrs'' German is its thoroughly idiomatic character; it is as good German as the rest of the play is English, and could hardly have been written by an Englishman who had not at some period of his life become thoroughly Germanised. I have therefore no hesitation in concluding a native hand to have aided Chapman at all events in these speeches, and in the Germanisms abounding in the rest of the dialogue.

On the other hand, it seems beyond the mark to suppose that Chapman or his coadjutor intended in this play any allusion to the German politics of the time of its production. The details concerning the Electoral College might, as Elze shows, easily have been taken from English

books—an English translation of the Golden Bull in particular had appeared in 1619. But if attention to chronological accuracy was a thought which doubtless never entered into the author's head—all he cared for being what is called 'local colouring' in political as well as social details—still less can he have intended a political double-meaning. The resemblance between the condition of Germany during the *Interregnum* and that at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War was in fact of too vague a character to have supplied suitable materials for such a purpose, nor can I perceive any evidence of its having been entertained by the author of this play[1].

Alphonsus, however, remains a very curious attempt to bring before English spectators a subject nominally taken from the history, and written with some real knowledge of the life, of a foreign country. There are in this tragedy, apart from the knowledge of the German language which it displays, passages which could not have been written except by one well acquainted with German ways and manners; but these have been so well elucidated by its German editor, that I need only refer to his guidance those interested in so unique an illustration of the intimate connexion which existed in this age between the two countries.

Revenge for Honour (printed 1654) is probably to be reckoned among Chapman's later plays, as the character of the versification, which resembles Beaumont and Fletcher's in the abundance of feminine endings to the lines, seems to indicate. In style, however, there is not much difference between this and the earlier tragedies of Chapman. Far removed from the baldness of *Alphonsus*, *Revenge for Honour* abounds with ingenious and graceful similes,

Revenge for Honour (pr. 1654).

[1] Dr. Elze (Introduction, p. 35) seems to forget his knowledge of the history of his country when he says that the 'Palsgrave' Frederick was, like Richard of Cornwall, 'elected to the imperial dignity by dissenting parties of the States.' So far as I know, James's son-in-law was elected to the Bohemian, not the imperial, crown; and the resemblance therefore dwindles into a very doubtful analogy. As for the likeness between the secretary Lorenzo and Pater Lamormain, it is little more than what might be traced in half the 'Macchiavellian' counsellors who were a standing figure of the Elisabethan stage.

drawn in particular from the observation of nature[1]. Thus versification and diction together give a luxurious tone to this play not ill-adapted to its subject, which is that of an Oriental palace-plot. Almanzor Caliph of Arabia has two sons by different wives. The younger son (Abrahen), in order to effect the ruin of the elder (Abilqualit), avails himself of his brother's guilty passion for Caropia (the wife of a rough lord named Mura) whom he himself unsuccessfully loves. The elder brother is condemned to have his eyes put out for a pretended act of violence, with which the intriguing Abrahen has persuaded Caropia to charge her too eager lover, so as to save herself from her husband's wrath. Abilqualit is the favourite of the soldiers, who attempt a rescue, in wrath at which the Sultan bids the Mutes (who characteristically enough play a considerable part in the action) strangle their prisoner. Overcome with grief for the loss of his noble son, the Sultan is murdered by a further device of Abrahen (a poisoned handkerchief), and the ambitious schemer now sees himself at the summit of success. Caropia herself—whose motive throughout is ambition rather than affection—now accepts his love; so that when Abilqualit reappears (for he has merely feigned death), there is obviously no way out of the situation except to make Abrahen kill Caropia and himself, and Caropia, foiled once more in her ambition, in the moment of her own death kill Abilqualit.

This unpleasant plot and the extremely unlovely character of the heroine might seem together likely to produce a play the reverse of acceptable; but apart from the excellence of the writing, the author has invested the character of Abilqualit with true nobility, while some of the other characters are likewise well drawn. Altogether the tragedy is very much superior to *Alphonsus*, with which it has been, I think injudiciously, coupled by critics.

Comedies.

In speaking of Chapman's comedies, it is necessary in the first instance to go back to the beginning of his

[1] See especially iv. 1, 2, and v. 2. The floral similes are particularly pleasing.

dramatic productivity, so far as its results are preserved to us.

The Blind Beggar of Alexandria (acted 1596 *circ.*; pr. 1598).

The earliest two extant comedies of Chapman both belong to the reign of Elisabeth, and are removed a few years in date of composition from his later dramatic productions. Of these, *The Blinde Beggar of Alexandria* (printed 1598, acted about two years previously) is much inferior to its successor. Its plot is that of an outrageously improbable romance; and its hero, the Protean beggar Irus (whose assumed Homeric name will be observed; his real name is Cleanthes, and he adopts a variety of aliases in order to conquer the hearts of several ladies), is hardly to be regarded as an effort at character. But already in this, the earliest of Chapman's extant plays, an occasional vein of poetic imaginativeness, finding expression in similes at once original and beautiful, will strike the reader. The influence of Marlowe may perhaps be thought traceable in the daring conception of the hero's ambition; and there is an indication in the play that Chapman, who in the year 1598 published his continuation of *Hero and Leander*, was under the influence of its author's muse [1]. The beauty of much of the versification is already considerable.

An Humorous Day's Mirth (pr. 1599).

The 'pleasant comedy entituled *An Humerous Dayes Myrth*' (printed 1599) is well named. Its plot is exceedingly slight, consisting of little more than a series of tricks played by a mischievous courtier called Lemot upon a doting old husband and a doting old wife, and played for mischief's sake only. But the characters are drawn with remarkable vivacity, and the dialogue is full of wit. The influence of Lyly is perceptible in this play by the side of that of Ben Jonson, with whose *Every Man out of his Humour* it was about contemporaneous [2]. The foolish old

[1] The line in the last scene of the play—

'None ever loved but at first sight they loved'—

is of course a plagiarism from *Hero and Leander*. The 'thumb-biting' in an earlier scene recalls a well-known passage in *Romeo and Juliet*.

[2] The repeated marked use of the word 'humour' is worth notice in this connexion. The two courtiers who are in possession of the 'complements of a

husband and his Puritan wife, whose fidelity to her principles he allows to undergo a series of trials before his eyes, are in the true vein of genuine comedy: and the manners of a Puritan lady of the higher class are here evidently drawn to the life [1]. The most celebrated personage in the play however is young Dowsecer, whose eloquent misanthropy has a touch in it of Hamlet, though the triviality of the plot admits of no full developement of the character [2].

All Fools (pr. 1605).

All Fooles (printed in 1605), though considerably inferior in humour of characterisation to *Eastward Hoe* (printed in the same year), likewise deserves to be ranked as a very admirable comedy. Its intricate plot, the nature of which is suggested by its title, and which in conception has some resemblance to that of *Every Man out of his Humour*, is well invented and very symmetrically executed. The pair of fathers, one of whom is deceived by means of a trick which he helps to play on the other, and again the jealous husband and the frivolous gallant [3], are effectively played off against one another: and with a poetic justice not always observable in the comic drama, the disreputable Rinaldo who sets them all by the ears is himself 'gulled' by his own cupidity. The writing of this play is excellent, both in matter and form. The descriptive humour of the passage in which old Gestango contrasts the courtly manners of his own days with the stolidity of the 'tobacco-

gentleman' are quite in Jonson's manner; much of the dialogue is in Lyly's, but freer in form.

[1] 'For it is written,' she says, 'we must pass to perfection through all temptation, *Abacucke* the fourth.'

[2] Dowsecer's speech to Cicero, and the following speeches, which are mostly in admirable blank verse, are printed as prose in the old edition, which the reprint (following the doubtful principle adopted in this series) literally reproduces.

[3] Valerio's description of him is excellent. He is

> 'A thing whose soul is specially employ'd
> In knowing where best Gloves, best Stockings, Waistcoats
> Curiously wrought are sold;'—

milliners' shops are his favourite haunt, and the art of shopping is his chief accomplishment,

> 'and for these womanly parts
> He is esteem'd a witty gentleman.' (Act v.)

drinking' youth of the new generation[1]; the waggish dialectics—something in Lyly's style—of the Page[2]; and the impudent rhetoric of Valerio's concluding harangue on a painfully humorous subject of which the Elisabethan comic writers seem never to have tired[3], as well as the burlesque declaration of divorce read out by the Notary[4], furnish instances of comic writing of the most entertaining variety. And in such a passage as this—

> 'How blind is Pride! what Eagles we are still
> In matters that belong to other men—
> What Beetles in our own[5]'—

we have that touch which we are accustomed to call Shaksperean, but which occurs frequently enough in Chapman to render too absolute a use of the epithet hazardous.

Monsieur d'Olive (pr. 1606).

Chapman's next play, the comedy of *Monsieur d'Olive*, printed 1606, is one of our most diverting Elisabethan comedies. Its main plot is perspicuous and interesting. The gallant Vendome, returning from a long voyage, finds two difficult tasks awaiting him. The lady to whom he has devoted his chivalrous service—bound to her by one of those artificial ties of courtesy with which in the Middle Ages the Provence, where the comedy may be supposed to play, was familiar—has in revenge for her husband's unjust jealousy secluded herself, as she vows for ever, from the world. His sister, whom he dearly loved, has died[6]; and her widower, the Count St. Anne, inconsolable in his grief, has caused her body to be embalmed instead of giving it Christian burial, and lives only for his grief. To bring these two back to reason is the object of Vendome's labours;

[1] Act ii. [2] Act iii.
[3] Act v. [4] Act iv.
[5] Act iv. The metaphor seems imitated, but with far less power of expression, by Randolph in his *The Muse's Looking-Glass* (i. 4).
[6] How sweet is the pathos, and how beautiful the verse, of the passage in which this is narrated:

> 'Your worthy sister, worthier far of heaven
> Than this unworthy hell of passionate Earth,
> Is taken up amongst her fellow Stars.'

For a longer passage of singular power of expression see St. Anne's speech at the beginning of act iii.

and he effects his end very skilfully. Feigning to be in love with his 'mistress'' sister[1], who is herself at heart enamoured of the faithful Count St. Anne, he prevails on the latter to plead his cause, and thus brings the inconsolable widower within the reach of his own cure. This situation is very charmingly worked out; not quite so good is the cure of Martia, brought about by producing in her a fear of unfaithfulness on the part of her repentant husband, to save whom from shame she at last abandons her retirement.

This double plot itself would have sufficed for a pleasing and graceful comedy; but the author has provided materials of broader mirth in one of the most original characters of our comic drama. Indeed this character is so original that it has been utterly misinterpreted[2], and would probably require to be performed by an actor of genuine humour as well as intelligence to be thoroughly realised. Monsieur d'Olive is a gentleman about town without any merits or any conscience of his own to speak of; but mighty well pleased with himself, and as ready to dispense his own wit as to be the cause of wit in others. He is thus a compound of fool and wag—and in the way in which these extremes are made to meet in him lies the originality of the character[3]. From the 'liberty' of his 'chamber,' where it is his joy to 'drink Sack and talk Satire,' he is called by the malicious device of two roguish courtiers to assume the

[1] The use of the terms 'brother' and 'sister' in this play requires considerable vigilance in the reader, who moreover (if he uses the 3 vol. edition) should be on his guard against the mis-assignments of many speeches to the wrong persons, in which the reprint follows the old edition.

[2] By Hazlitt (with all his shrewdness frequently an unsafe guide), who considers 'the introductory sketch of Monsieur d'Olive' 'the undoubted prototype of that light, flippant, gay, and infinitely delightful class of character of the professed men about town, which we have in such perfection in Wycherley and Congreve, both in the sentiments and in the style of writing.' Bodenstedt (*u. s.*, p. 333) makes a similar comparison.

[3] It therefore in some respects resembles one of the most humorous comic conceptions of the stage of the present generation, Mr. Sothern's Lord Dundreary. There are points in which the resemblance is ludicrously close. Thus above all Monsieur d'Olive's invariable approval of any facetious remark offered by an interlocutor: 'Ever good i' faith.' 'Bitter, in verity, bitter. But good still in its kind.' 'Good again.' 'Bitter still.'

office of ambassador—of course only in order to furnish sport for the Court; and the sublime self-consciousness[1] with which he accepts the post, and, by way of showing forth his powers as an 'orator,' repeats the famous speech which he made at a kind of Discussion Forum in praise of Tobacco[2], is in the richest vein of fun. He hires a retinue of followers, of whom he has a most diverting account to give; but when he is ready to start, it suddenly appears that the object of his mission has been already accomplished, and that he has in short been 'gulled.' He goes off however in imperturbable good-humour; and his tormentors are left lamenting that 'here we may strike the *Plaudite* to our Play, my Lord fool's gone: all our audience will forsake us.' They contrive however to bring him back for some more merriment by writing him a feigned love-letter as from a lady of the Court; and he is thus enabled to wind up the comedy with a witty speech about 'raising fortunes,' the point of which was not likely to be lost by an audience in those days of knights adventurers and humbler species of speculators such as Monsieur d'Olive enumerates. 'An a man,' he observes, 'will play the fool and be a Lord, or be a fool and play the Lord, he shall be sure to want no followers, so there be hope to raise their fortunes.'

Monsieur d'Olive, of whose drolleries I regret to be unable to give more abundant specimens, therefore deservedly gives his name to this excellent comedy.

The Gentleman Usher (pr. 1606).

In *The Gentleman Usher* (printed 1606) Chapman has attempted more than his genius, perhaps too hastily called on to perform the task, seems to have been equal to accomplishing. This play begins as a light comedy of intrigue. The aged Duke Alphonso is bent upon marrying the fair Margaret, of whom his son is deeply enamoured. While his son's wishes are seconded by a lord of the name of Strozza, the Duke's confidant is a counsellor who calls him-

[1] 'Above all sins,' he superfluously prays, 'heaven shield me from the sin of blushing.'

[2] Preceded by the speech against Tobacco made by the weaver, who held it at hot enmity, being unfitted for its enjoyment by his nose, which '(according to the Puritanic cut)' had a 'narrow bridge.'

self Medice,—an ungentle, malignant fellow [1]. The first two acts pass in entertainments at the house of Margaret's father, in the arrangement of which his busy and conceited Gentleman Usher takes a prominent part. With the third act the real action of the play—both comic and serious—begins. The former may be dismissed at once; it is chiefly concerned with the humours of the personage who gives his name to the play. (There is however another diverting character, that of the foolish youth Pogio, who thinks 'gentility must be fantastical,' and disports himself throughout the piece, which commences with his telling his dreams.) But the Gentleman Usher, a silly busybody whom the Prince gains over by flattery, without using him to much purpose, is not drawn with any striking success, and cannot rank high as a comic creation. The serious interest lies in two episodes. Strozza having been dangerously wounded with an arrow by a huntsman suborned by Medice, breaks out into raving despair over his pain and peril; but the solemn counsel of his wife brings him to a better frame of mind; and he thereupon dilates —in a passage not however to be numbered among Chapman's finer efforts—on the blessings of conjugal fidelity. His now pious frame of mind enables him, as by divine inspiration, to see into the future; he knows that on the seventh day the arrow now rankling in his breast will leave it, and he foresees the terrible danger to which his friend the Prince is exposed. For meanwhile Prince Vincentio has bound himself to Margaret by a vow to which the lovers have resolved to attach all the significance of marriage itself. The finely-written scene where they exchange oaths over this strange ceremony [2] is one

[1] Nobody besides the Duke has a good word for him, except the old hag Corteza, who is pleased with his failure as an orator:

> 'Me thought I likde his manly being out;
> It becomes Noblemen to doe nothing well.'

His hatred of learning resembles that of the Fox in Spenser's *Mother Hubbard's Tale*.

[2] Act iv. The passage is too long for quotation. I wonder Charles Lamb should not have extracted it.

of the most peculiar passages in the Elisabethan drama; full of deep passion, it at the same time reveals on the part of the poet a strange recklessness of feeling with regard to the institution of marriage, which he makes his lovers set at defiance. Their secret love is discovered by the Duke; Vincentio is mortally wounded by the eager Medice; and Margaret, to escape from a hateful doom, disfigures her beauty. This painful situation, the last element in which must surely have seemed hideous on the stage, is finally solved by a *deus ex machinâ* in the shape of a skilful physician who cures the Prince's wound and restores the beauty of Margaret. The villainous devices of Medice having been revealed and his dark antecedents disclosed by himself (his name was originally Mendice, and he was of no country, never christened, and brought up among the gipsies), he is ignominiously dismissed; and all ends happily.

It will be seen that this comedy is full of ambitious elements; but having indicated these, I need dwell on it no longer, for it seems to me in execution by no means one of Chapman's happiest plays. The daring inventiveness which he here exhibits in the devising of original situations required to be seconded by unusual labour in composition; and this, strange to say, he seems on the present occasion to have spared. Strozza's speeches — with one notable exception[1] — rise little above a merely rhetorical level; and though there is a startling passionateness in the principal

[1] I refer to the remarkable passage in which he gives vent to a political philosophy which must have sounded strange in the ears of any courtier of King James who heard it:

> 'And what's a Prince? Had all been virtuous men,
> There never had been Prince upon the earth,
> And so no subject; all men had been Princes:
> A virtuous man is subject to no Prince,
> But to his soul and honour; which are laws,
> That carry Fire and Sword within themselves
> Never corrupted, never out of rule;
> What is there in a Prince? That his least lusts
> Are valued at the lives of other men,
> When common faults in him should prodigies be,
> And his gross dotage rather loath'd than sooth'd.' (Act v.)

scene between Vincentio and Margaret, it remains an isolated passage in a love-intrigue otherwise carried out without much force of writing. And the chief comic character is as far removed from the grave irony which envelopes that of Malvolio as from the vivacious humour pervading that of Chapman's own Monsieur d'Olive.

May-day (pr. 1611).

May-Day (printed 1611) is a 'witty Comedie' of no elevated type,—a farrago in short of vulgar plots and counterplots, with no special humour in any of the characters to make it worthy of notice, though in the liveliness of its diction it bespeaks its authorship[1]. Among the more prominent characters are an amorous old dotard, who in the pursuit of his unseasonable ambition assumes the disguise of a chimney-sweep; a waiting-woman called Temperance, an amusing specimen of the Dame Quickly class; and a captain called Quintiliano, who thinks war 'exceeding naught,' carries on his campaigns with 'munition of manchet, napery, plates, spoons, glasses, and so-forth,' and has for 'Lieutenant' a promising youth of the name of Innocentio.

The Widow's Tears (pr. 1612).

The Widdowes Tearcs (printed 1612) is a comedy sufficiently disagreeable in subject, but not ineffective in execution. It exemplifies in the persons of the real widow Eudora and the self-supposed widow Cynthia the hollowness of female declarations of fidelity. The tempter in the former case is 'Tharsalio the wooer,' an energetic personage whose manner of achieving his object humorously illustrates the truth of Thackeray's axiom that an infallible method for making any body give way is to tread on his toes. Cynthia is deceived into a belief in her husband's death by her husband himself, who afterwards, disguised as a soldier, visits her in the tomb where she is lamenting his loss. This uncomfortable mixture of a ghastly situation with a comic action is certainly not pleasant to read. The story was borrowed by Chapman from that of the Matron of Ephesus in the *Satyricon* of Petronius.

[1] Besides a passage in ridicule of the inevitable *Spanish Tragedy*, the quotation of phrases from *Hamlet*, Marston's *Antonio and Mellida*, and Marlowe's *Dido*, with a bombastic line from which the comedy closes, may be noticed.

The character of the feeble Spartan suitor of Eudora, Rebus, who persistently declines to resent an injury because of the respect due to 'the place,' as well as those of Eudora's *soi-disant* 'reformed Tenant,' the disreputable Arsace, and of the imbecile Governor, the very incarnation of an incompetent magistrate[1] ('the perfect draught of a most brainless, imperious upstart'), are fairly amusing.

The Mask of the Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn (Feb. 1613).

The above exhaust the list of the extant dramatic works of Chapman written entirely by himself. On his *Maske of the Middle Temple and Lyncolns Inne*, performed at the celebration of the nuptials of the Princess Elisabeth and the Elector Palatine in February 1613, it is needless to dwell. It formed one of a series of masks contributed by Campion, Chapman, and Beaumont (who wrote that of *The Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*[2]) on this occasion; but though there was never a finer subject for a composition of the kind, it cannot be said that Chapman's effort is in any way remarkable; the lyrics are indeed poor.

Plays written by Chapman conjointly with other authors:

But, like most of his contemporaries, he was associated with other dramatists in the production of plays. Of the comedy of *Eastward Hoe* incidental mention has already been made[3], and as I should judge this exceedingly well-written piece to owe more to Chapman than to Marston, while Jonson probably only contributed some touches, this may be the most appropriate place in which to speak of it.

Chapman, Marston, (and Jonson)'s Eastward Ho (pr. 1605).

Eastward Hoe (printed 1605) may be unhesitatingly described as one of the liveliest and healthiest, as it is one of the best-constructed, comedies of its age. Unlike the plays of *Westward Hoe* and *Northward Hoe*[4], with

[1] 'Peace varlet; dost chop with me? I say it is imagined thou hast murdered Lysander. How it will be proved I know not. Thou shalt therefore presently be had to execution, as justice in such cases requireth. Soldiers take him away.' The Governor's justice has the advantage of logical sequence over Dogberry's, which it resembles in phraseology (*Much Ado*, iv. 2).

[2] They are all given in Nichols, *Prbgresses &c. of James I*, vol. iii. Jonson was at this time absent abroad. John Taylor, the Water-Poet, contributed an account of the 'Sea-Fights and Fire-Workes' (accompanied by verses) entitled *Heaven's Blessing and Earth's Joy*.

[3] Vol. i. p. 525.

[4] *Vide infra*, under Dekker.

which in its Prologue any comparison is courteously deprecated[1], *Eastward Hoe* is something better than a coarse dramatic satire on the corrupting influences of Court fashions and vices upon City life. In a lucidly constructed plot it exhibits the opposite results of a modest pursuit of the path of duty, and of a wanton hankering after a sham gentility. This homely lesson is exemplified in the person of the virtuous and the idle apprentice—Golding and Quicksilver —and of the two daughters of their master, the goldsmith Touchstone. Of these, Mildred contents herself with the honest heart and hand of the industrious apprentice, and is rewarded by seeing him rise rapidly to a position of prosperity and dignity. In the course of the play he already attains to the dignity of deputy-alderman, and his father-in-law is able to prophesy for him a reputation beyond that of Dick Whittington himself[2]. Girtred (Gertrude), on the other hand, encouraged by the foolish vanity of her mother, is consumed by an ambitious desire to ride in her own coach, and as the surest means towards consummating this aspiration, engages herself to marry a knight, Sir Petronel Flash. Sir Petronel however is a mere 'thirty pound knight,' and a *chevalier d'industrie* to boot, or in the phraseology of the day, a 'knight adventurer.' While his bride sets off on a fool's errand in her coach, he is taking measures for departing with his congenial companions, Captain Seagull and Messrs. Spendal and Scapethrift, on a speculative voyage to the Eldorado of Virginia[3]. In this intended

[1] The title is said not to have been chosen

> 'out of our contention to do better
> Than that which is oppos'd to ours in title;
> For that was good, and better cannot be.'

[2] 'Worshipful son! I cannot contain my self, I must tell thee; I hope to see thee one o' the monuments of our city, and reckon'd among her worthies to be remembered the same day with the Lady Ramsey and grave Gresham, when the famous fable of Whittington and his puss shall be forgotten, and thou and thy acts become the posies for hospitals; when thy name shall be written upon conduits, and thy deeds plaid i' thy lifetime by the best companies of actors, and be called their get-penny. This I divine and prophesy.'

[3] 'I tell thee, gold is more plentiful there than copper is with us.... Why, man, all their dripping-pans are pure gold; and all the chains with which

expedition Sir Petronel further associates with himself the prodigal apprentice, who has broken loose from all restraint, and the wife of a usurer. But as the company get drunk before entering the boat ready to convey them to their ship, a stormy night, of which they have neglected the warnings[1], wrecks them all on the Isle of Dogs, whence they are brought up before the virtuous deputy-alderman. After spending a few days in prison (where Quicksilver and Flash play the part of converted sinners) they are ultimately sent forth, sadder if not wiser men.

The humour of the successive scenes in this play is extremely fresh and natural, and the characters are full of life and spirit. The idle apprentice, with his quotations from the popular plays of the day[2] and his resolution to 'snore out his enfranchised state;' the foolish City girl, with *her* quotations from fashionable lyrics, her difficulty in knowing how to 'bear her hands' in her new gown, and her burning desire to be 'married to a most fine castle i' the country,' and to ride thither in her own coach; the knight, sick of town[3] and reckless of the faintest shadow of morality; the honest tradesman with his homely wisdom and his set phrase 'Work upon that now;' as well as the minor characters, the usurer Securitie, with his eloquent defence of his modest trade and his 'commodities' of 'figs and raisins,' the lawyer Bramble, and the keeper of

they chain up their streets are massy gold; and for rubies and diamonds, they go forth on holidays and gather 'em by the sea-shore, to hang on their childrens' coats, and stick in their childrens' caps, as commonly as our children wear saffron-gilt brooches and groats with holes in 'em.' The whole of this scene (iii. 2) is worth reading as an illustration of the gold-fever which prevailed in these times, and had received fresh fuel from Ralegh's *Discovery of Guiana*, published in 1596.

[1] 'A porpoise,' says Sir Petronel—'what's that to th' purpose?' (iii. 2.) The description of the storm on the Thames (iv. 1) is extremely vivid.

[2] 'Ta, lyre, lyre, ro, who calls Jeronimo?' (i. 1.) 'Holla, ye pampered ladies of Asia!' (ii. 1.) 'I was a courtier in the Spanish court, and Don Andrea was my name.' (*ib.*)

[3] 'I'll out of this wicked town as fast as my horse can trot! Here's now no good action for a man to spend his time in. Taverns grow dead; ordinaries are blown up; players are at a stand; houses of hospitality at a fall; not a feather waving, not a spur gingling anywhere.' (ii. 1.)

the counter, Master Woolfe, who has had men almost of all religions in the land under his care, but on enquiry thinks the best religion was theirs 'that pay fees best: we never examine their consciences further,'—all these and others make up a list of *dramatis personae* far more varied than the usual group of City tradesmen with their frail wives and the fashionable enemies of their peace, who weary or disgust us in so many contemporary comedies. But the excellence of the plot is perhaps an even more exceptional merit; nor is there any reason why, certain omissions being made, this admirable comedy should not have kept the stage to the present day[1].

Shirley and Chapman's The Ball (licensed 1632.

With Shirley, the last of the more noteworthy among the pre-Restoration dramatists, Chapman combined in the production of two plays, a tragedy and a comedy. The latter, called *The Ball* (licensed 1632, printed 1639), will be more appropriately noticed among Shirley's plays, while as to the former most readers will be inclined to follow Dyce in concluding 'nearly the whole'—or at least the body—of it to be from Chapman's pen.

Chapman and Shirley's Chabot (licensed 1635.

The tragedy of *Chabot, Admiral of France*[2] (licensed 1635, printed 1639) recalls in the general nature of its subject Chapman's most striking tragedies, *Bussy d'Ambois*, *The Conspiracy of Byron*, and their respective sequels. But the difference in the subject is of importance; for while Bussy d'Ambois is a daring adventurer who rises by his boldness rather than his merits, and Biron a powerful vassal who falls by reason of his own insolent pride, Chabot, like the 'Loyal Subject' of Heywood's play, is the victim of jealousy and detraction, and remains, in evil as in good fortune, true to himself and to his lofty conception of his duty. The character of the hero—founded on a historical original, though the name is changed[3]—is there-

[1] It was in fact adapted (by Mrs. Lennox) under the name of *Old City Manners* for the Drury Lane stage as late as 1775, having been revived after the Restoration under a more significant local title in 1685. Cf. Geneste, i. 441; v. 481.

[2] Printed in vol. vi. of Dyce's edition of Shirley's *Dramatic Works and Poems*.

[3] The story of Admiral Chabot is that of Admiral Brion, whose fall, brought

fore one which, unlike that of Biron, engages the warm sympathy of the reader. The action of the play is carried on with great spirit, and the concluding act in which Chabot, though restored to the royal favour, dies of a broken heart in the King's presence, has true pathos[1]. There are many passages in the play which are in Chapman's best manner; but the lively sketch of the Proctor-General, with his interminable speeches delivered successively with equal promptitude and good-will on the two opposite sides of the question, is I imagine from Shirley's hand. It would not be difficult to trace in this interesting tragedy allusions to the vices by which the judicial system of England was tainted in this age. To whatever extent this play may be attributable to Chapman, it is as a whole worthy of remembrance by the side of his best dramatic works.

Chapman as a dramatist.

From the preceding remarks on Chapman's various plays it will have been gathered how high an estimate I have formed of the poetic gifts of which they give evidence. Though destitute of a knowledge of dramatic effect neither in the tragic nor in the comic branch of the playwright's art, it would almost seem as if Chapman had lacked the power, when working alone, of fully developing a character by means of dramatic action: as plays none of

about by Montmorency and the Chancellor Poyet, occurred in 1541. In 1542 Francis I relieved Brion from the fine imposed upon him and restored him to his offices, Montmorency having to leave the Court and Poyet being tried and (in 1545) condemned by a commission. The historical Brion was favoured by a mistress of the King; and the historical Poyet fell (though he was afterwards liberated from prison) on account of his remarks against female influence. The play therefore entirely inverts history. See Schmidt, *Gesch. Frankreichs*, vol. ii. pp. 668-670.

[1] 'Thus in the summer a tall flourishing tree
Transplanted by strong hand, with all her leaves
And blooming pride upon her, makes a shew
Of spring, tempting the eye with wanton blossom;
But not the sun, with all his amorous smiles,
The dews of morning, or the tears of night
Can root her fibres in the earth again,
Or make her bosom kind, to growth and bearing,
But the tree withers.' (v. 3.)

the comedies or tragedies written by him alone are comparable to *Eastward Hoe* and *Chabot* respectively. But though falling short of this power, he is happy in the invention of character in both tragedy and comedy,—in the latter more particularly, as his Monsieur d'Olive would alone suffice to prove.

The length of time over which his known years of activity as a dramatist extend would lead one *a priori* to expect a change in style to be observable in his later as compared with his earlier works. With the exception of *Chabot*, it cannot however be said that those of his tragedies which are probably latest in date exhibit any marked advance upon those belonging to an earlier period, though I am by no means inclined to rank one of his two posthumously-printed tragedies (*Revenge for Honour*) on the same low level as the other (*Alphonsus*). Of his comedies the earliest are certainly the least advanced.

The influence of the epical form of composition to which Chapman had become habituated is indisputably observable in his plays. He loves to narrate at full length; thus we find him in three of his plays[1] resorting to the classical expedient of a 'Nuntius' or Messenger, and in others he lingers with evident pleasure over passages of a narrative kind. But this influence is not so marked as might be expected; and both in tragedy and in comedy he shows a strong sense of the importance of situation, though to that of the progress of action he is not always sufficiently alive. Though he is too fond of indulging a tendency to rhetoric, I cannot agree with those critics who have considered him prone to bombast, the instances of which in his plays seem to me very exceptional. Of humour as well as wit he must be allowed to have possessed a real though not a very fertile vein.

His strength to be sought in particular passages.

But the strength of Chapman lies in particular passages rather than in his plays as a whole. With the exception of Shakspere ('always except Plato,' says the Duke of Savoy in *Byron's Conspiracy*), he has no superior or equal

[1] *The Blind Beggar; Bussy d'Ambois; Caesar and Pompey.*

among our Elisabethan dramatists in the beauty of individual passages. This beauty is not solely one of form, nor is the pleasure derived from it merely due to the admiration excited by Chapman's poetic inventiveness, ranging over a wide field in the choice of similes and making its choice with wonderful felicitousness. Like Shakspere he is able at times to reveal by these sudden flashes of poetic power depths of true feeling as well as of true wisdom. His observation is strikingly original as well as apt; there is often something proverbial or gnomic about these passages, of which it would be well worth while to attempt a complete anthology. He is particularly powerful in his passing revelations with reference to a sex which he seems to have studied rather than loved—for he has hardly drawn a single female character (unless it be Tamyra) worth remembering. But his wisdom rises to its greatest dignity on a subject on which he must have thought deeply as well as keenly; he frequently returns to his conception of true freedom as contained within the fulfilment of duty and obedience to law, while in lawlessness, whether in the despot or in the rebel, he finds a sin against that principle of Order which he reverences.

Influence of his classical learning upon his style.

Chapman's style is inevitably influenced by his classical learning; but it would be an error to suppose him pedantically prone to a display of it. With the exception of *Alphonsus*, his plays, though abounding in classical allusions, are not, either throughout or in parts, overlaid by them; he is too genuine a scholar to quote out of season. The number of references to Homer is of course very great; and it would certainly make a perceptible difference in the aspect of his dialogue, had the concatenation of negatives suggested by the speculative Clermont stopped this source of illustrations[1]. Other classical authors are how-

[1] 'Had faith, nor shame, all hospitable rights
Been broke by Troy, Greece had not made that slaughter.
Had that been sav'd (says a Philosopher)
The Iliads and Odysses had been lost.'
The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois (act ii).

The same play (act iv) contains a curious passage about pedantic critics of Homer.

ever quoted as almost equally familiar resources, after a fashion very different from the superficial show of classical learning in which so many of the earlier dramatists were wont to indulge. Yet though Chapman was also possibly well acquainted with the German language, and though he was manifestly a diligent student of historical as well as poetic literature, there is no proof of his learning having extended over so wide a range as that of Ben Jonson, whose robust mental digestion absorbed almost every kind of material.

His versification.

Finally, after the quotations which I have incidentally permitted myself, it will be needless to speak at length of the extreme beauty of Chapman's versification. Some of his earlier plays show traces of at least one mannerism which he seems afterwards to have avoided—I mean the repetition of a closing word in several lines near together[1]: and in what was probably one of his last plays (*Revenge for Honour*) he has evidently fallen into the excessive use of feminine endings characteristic of the versification of Beaumont and Fletcher[2]. But Chapman's line in general holds the mean between the dissolved sweetness of these poets and the self-contained strength of Marlowe in his earliest works; and in versification, as in that which informs poetic style, Chapman resembles Shakspere more closely than any of their common contemporaries.

The names of the two dramatists whose works I proceed in the next instance briefly to review are connected after a less pleasing fashion than Chapman's with that of Jonson. Chapman he 'loved;' upon Dekker and Marston he poured forth his most vigorous vituperation. It is however due to these writers to notice them out of, as well as in their Jonsonian aliases of Demetrius and Crispinus.

[1] I have noted this more particularly in *All Fooles*.

[2] Dr. Elze (*u. s.*, p. 37) observes that in *Alphonsus* 'the archaic dissolution of the final *ion* and of similar terminations in the end (sometimes even in the body) of the line is intentionally and almost religiously observed;' whereas in Chapman's earlier plays this dissolution only occurs exceptionally. From *Revenge for Honour* it seems so far as I have observed to be absent—another indication of the doubtfulness of the supposition that *Alphonsus* and *Revenge for Honour* were written by the same poet at the same period of his career.

Thomas Dekker (1570 *circ* to 1640 *circ.*).

Among the comic dramatists of this period THOMAS DEKKER[1] holds a place, not indeed in my opinion of great eminence, but one decidedly his own. Charles Lamb, whose fine critical sympathy makes him so sure a guide to individual passages of exceptional beauty, but whose general estimates are not perhaps always equally trustworthy, speaks of Dekker as 'having poetry enough for anything.' Touches of true pathos are indeed occasionally perceptible in this writer; his lyrical gift, though it has possibly been overrated, is incontestable; a particular species of humour he most certainly had at command; and when at his best he is distinguished by a vigorous freshness such as would be in vain sought for in Ben Jonson, and which at times recalls the most delightful quality of Greene. But his imaginative powers were rather narrowly circumscribed; rude in form, he is coarse in the whole texture of his genius, and there is little if any progress perceptible in the series of his works, which taken altogether would have of themselves left our drama much in the state in which they found it. Undoubtedly, in considering the plays with which Dekker's name is associated, one is in many cases hampered by the difficulty of determining the respective shares of himself and of his coadjutors; but, on the assumption most favourable to him, it can hardly be said that in any of his works he realised that ideal of dramatic power of which he seems to have had a not inadequate appreciation[2].

[1] *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, with Illustrative Notes and a Memoir of the Author.* 4 vols. 1873. (Reprint.) A full list of Dekker's dramatic and other productions is given in Dr. Nott's abundantly annotated edition of *The Gul's Hornebooke* (1812).

[2] See the Prologue to *If This be not a Good Play, &c.*:

> 'Give me that man,
> Who when the Plague of an impostum'd brains
> (Breaking out) infects a theatre, and hotly reigns,
> Killing the hearers' hearts, that the vast rooms
> Stand empty, like so many dead-men's tombs,
> Can call the banish'd auditor home, and tie
> His ear (with golden chain) to his melody:
> Can draw with adamantine pen even creatures
> Forg'd out of th' hammer, on tiptoe, to reach up

His life and reputation.

Dekker's life, like many of his plays, seems to have had London for its main scene. Here he was born, apparently about the year 1570; here by the year 1597 he had begun to work for the managers Henslowe and Alleyn, and had produced the first of his plays of which we have mention (*Phaeton*, 1597[1]). His earliest extant play, *The Shoemakers' Holiday*, is redolent of the life of London city, which may truly claim Dekker as one of its poets. But though he is never weary of celebrating its traditions as well as stigmatising its sins, while he displays the most intimate acquaintance with its manners and customs in both city and suburbs, London seems to have been no 'kindly nurse' to her faithful son. Of the difficulties which beset the playwright's profession Dekker had more than his share. Already in 1598 Henslowe is lending money 'to discharge Mr. Dekker out of the counter in the Poultry'—a locality of which he preserved a very distinct remembrance, and which in a play written by him conjointly with Middleton is with grim humour described as 'an university' where 'men pay more dear for their wit than any where[2].' And later in his life (from 1613–6) he seems to have spent three years in the King's Bench Prison, where he received charity from his old employer Alleyn. For the rest, his reputation as a playwright was considerable enough to cause him to be entrusted with the main part of the devising of the Pageant for the reception of King James in the City in 1604[3]; and he was occasionally employed on similar compositions in honour of new Lord Mayors. Though he

> And (from rare silence) clap their brawny hands
> T' applaud what their charm'd soul scarce understands.
> That man give me, whose breast, fill'd by the Muses
> With raptures, into a second them infuses:
> Can give an actor sorrow, rage, joy, passion,
> Whilst he again (by self-same agitation)
> Commands the hearers, sometimes drawing out tears,
> Then smiles, and fills them both with hopes and fears.'

[1] Cf. *infra*, p. 49.

[2] *The Roaring Girle.*

[3] He had commemorated Queen Elisabeth's death and funeral in his *Wonderful Year*, 1603.

appears to have had at least one generous patron[1], he must have mainly depended for support upon his literary labours, which were by no means confined to the drama[2]. His dramatic productivity seems to have been very considerable, and he co-operated as an author with many of the most popular dramatists of his age. Finally, the fact that he was chosen to lead the attack upon Ben Jonson on behalf of the dramatists who deemed themselves outraged by some provocation unknown to us, and that after Jonson had anticipated their revenge by an attack upon Dekker and Marston, it was Dekker who replied—apparently to the satisfaction of the public—furnishes the best proof of his prominence. The year of his death is unknown, but no traces of him occur after 1638.

The Shoemakers' Holiday (acted 1599).

Among Dekker's extant plays his comedies seem to me to deserve the foremost mention. The earliest of these, *The Shomakers' Holiday, or The Gentle Craft* (printed in 1600, and according to Henslowe acted already in the preceding year), has merits which it would be difficult to show Dekker to have surpassed in any of his later works. In this pleasant comedy 'nothing,' as the Prologue tells us, 'is purposed but mirth;' and this single-minded purpose is abundantly fulfilled. It would be ungrateful to quarrel with the rather forced way in which the disguise of the noble lover of the City damsel is accounted for; inasmuch as his becoming a shoemaker's journeyman creates the opportunity for the scenes in which the humour of the play centres. In these scenes the manners and customs of 'the gentle craft' are depicted[3], and in one of them we first meet with the most entertaining figure of the whole

[1] See the Dedication (to Lodowick Carlell) of *Match me in London*.

[2] He was the author of several prose tracts, among them the amusing *Gul's Horne-booke* (1609), and an attack upon the Catholics after the Gunpowder Plot, called *Of the Double PP* (1606). His *A Knight's Conjuring, &c.*, interesting for several references to other dramatists, has been edited for the Percy Society (*Publ.*, vol. v) by Mr. Rimbault.

[3] Dekker must have had a special love for shoemakers; for he recurs to them more than once in other plays, and in *Match me in London* repeats one of the situations of *The Shoemakers' Holiday*. 'The gentle craft' is a term often applied to shoemakers in our comic drama; *e.g.* in Fletcher's *Love's Cure* (ii. 1).

comedy—indeed the happiest comic creation of Dekker—the master-shoemaker, Simon Eyre. This worthy's well-deserved good-luck finally raises him to the dignity of Lord Mayor, in which capacity he gives an entertainment graced by the presence of the King to the shoemakers of London, and takes the opportunity of solving the difficulty of the plot of the piece. The character of Eyre is thoroughly fresh and original; and his jolting talk, consisting chiefly of an inexhaustible flow of brief sentences, nervous and sudden like the punches of a vigorous awl, is quite *sui generis*. He lavishes it with perfect impartiality upon high and low, upon his wife (whose own favourite phrase 'but let that pass' stands her in good stead) and (by express permission) upon the King himself; for he is a man who will let no one 'stand upon pishery pashery,' and knows 'how to speak to a Pope, to Sultan Solyman, to Tamerlane, an he were here . . . and shall I droop before my Sovereign?'

Old Fortunatus (pr. 1600).

In his second extant comedy Dekker ventured upon ground apparently less suited to his genius. *Olde Fortunatus* (printed 1600) is of course founded in subject on the old German story, to which a Breton and a primitive Teutonic origin have been variously ascribed [1], and which appears to have been frequently reprinted and translated in the sixteenth century [2]. Thus there is something in the origin of this play recalling Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, with which Dekker had had a special opportunity of acquainting himself; but so far as treatment is concerned, Dekker's play is even ruder than Marlowe's. Ushered in by a prologue, full of the robustest kind of flattery to 'Eliza flourishing like May' (in her sixty-eighth year), the play opens (after an introductory speech by Fortunatus) with an allegorical scene full of historical allusions which it is hardly worth while to verify. Fortunatus having made

[1] Vilmar, *Gesch. d. deutschen Nationall.* i. 392.

[2] 'Ould Fortunatus wishing cappe' is mentioned in Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* (Part II, ii. 2); and his 'cap and pouch' in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Honest Man's Fortune* (iv. 2). Tieck revived the story of Fortunatus as part of his *Phantasms* (vol. iii, 1816).

choice of the gift of wealth, is accordingly endowed with the wonderful purse. He then begins a series of travels, in the course of which he robs the unwary Grand Turk of the wonderful hat; but his riches cannot save him from a miserable death. The lesson of his fate has however been lost upon his son Andelocia, with whose marvellous adventures—leading to an even more wretched end—the remainder of the play is occupied. The construction of this drama is necessarily lax; the wild defiance of the unities of time and place accords well with the nature of the subject; but as the author seems so strongly impressed by the moral of his story, he should not have allowed the virtuous as well as the vicious son of Fortunatus to come to grief. Among the minor characters may be noticed the honest serving-man Shadow, who is the clown of the piece[1], and the 'frantic lover' Orleans, the drawing of which latter character Lamb has I think much overpraised. Altogether this romantic comedy has considerable vigour and freshness; but its principal merit lies in the appropriately straightforward treatment of its simple, not to say childlike theme.

Satiromastix (pr. 1602).

Dekker's next comedy, on the other hand, ambitiously sought to combine with the purposes of a dramatic entertainment those of a literary manifesto.

Of the circumstances which led to the production of *Satiromastix, or The Untrussing of the Humorous Poet* (printed 1602), enough has been stated above[2] to make it unnecessary to resume the subject at any length. In itself this comedy is in truth a feeble enough reply to an attack abounding in genuine vigour; and if there is anything in Dekker's effort deserving praise, it is the fact that its invective, though excessively coarse, is not absolutely boundless. 'Horace' is indeed ridiculed for his supposed slowness of workmanship[3], his affectation of learning, his

[1] Andelocia calls him his 'little lean *Iniquity*.'

[2] Vol. i. p. 522.

[3] I am not sure whether the most amusing passage in the play is not the first appearance of Horace 'sitting in a study behind a curtain; a candle by him burning, books lying confusedly,' where Jonson's supposed laboured method of

egregious vanity, his splenetic bitterness of spirit, his want of straightforwardness in attack, his perversity in setting himself against the public voice[1], likewise for his old clothes and other peculiarities of his personal appearance. Crispinus and Demetrius, on the other hand, are of course the modest representatives of merit, slow to be provoked even to self-defence, and solemnly dignified in their utterances. The necessary amount of brutality is introduced by taunts against the 'bricklayer' and the 'poor journeyman player;' nor are the self-conscious pseudonyms—'Asper' and 'Criticus'—passed by under which 'Horace' had previously given vent to his humours; while the sentence of 'blanketing' and the final 'untrussing' itself savour of the robustest style of practical retort. But it cannot be fairly asserted either that the subject of all this ridicule is treated with actual contempt as a poet, or that the point of view is wholly forgotten, of making his moral foibles rather

composition, rather perhaps than his fine little Bacchanal itself (*Poetaster*, iii. 1), is thus ridiculed:

'*Hor.* (to himself):

To thee whose forehead swells with Roses,
Whose most haunted bower
Gives life and scent to every flower,
Whose most adored name encloses,
Things abstruse, deep and divine,
Whose yellow tresses shine
Bright as Eoan fire.
O me thy Priest inspire.
For I to thee and thine immortal name
In—in—in golden tunes,
For I to thee and thine immortal name
In—sacred raptures flowing, flowing, swimming, swimming:
In sacred raptures swimming,
Immortal name, game, dame, tame, lame, lame, lame,
—— hath, shame, proclaim, oh—
In sacred raptures flowing, will proclaim, not—
O me thy priest inspire!
For I to thee and thine immortal name,
In flowing numbers filled with sprite and flame,
Good, good, in flowing numbers filled with sprite and flame.'

[1] This foible is cleverly touched upon in the Epilogue: 'Are you advis'd what you do when you hiss? You blow away Horace's revenge: but if you set your hands and seals to this, Horace will write against *it*, and you may have more sport.'

than literary impotence the real ground of the satire. So much credit for good-sense, in the midst of a great amount of nonsense, should I think be allowed to the chosen champion of a clique who, though a *Dunciad* had been launched against them, were in the *Satiromastix* by no means represented by a dunce.

Dekker was in too great a hurry, or his inventive powers were too unequal to so unusual a demand upon them, to admit of his making more than an episode in a play out of his attack upon Ben Jonson. The plot into which he has introduced this episode is itself one which, if carefully developed, would have furnished occasion for situations of much tragic effect. But he has treated it superficially and wholly without power; while the absurd incongruity of combining a satirical picture of the 'Humorous Poet,' the Horace of *The Poetaster*, with a romantic story playing at the Court of William Rufus, is intolerable. Nor is the action of the play helped on by the low-comedy of the Welshman and the other lovers of the Widow Miniver. Least creditable of all is the wholesale plagiarism, from the very play which is to be ridiculed, of its best character, Captain Tucca, which moreover is spoilt in the stealing; for Dekker's Tucca is merely a coarse brute, whose sole endeavour is to outvie in filthiness of language the Tucca of Jonson. Moreover, there is a notable want of art in putting satirical invective against Horace into Tucca's unsavoury mouth; for in *The Poetaster* he had of course been treated as an ally of Horace's adversaries, and the vituperation of a Tucca in fact only amounts to praise in disguise. Altogether the effort is, from a literary point of view, little better than contemptible; and the success with which it seems to have met cannot be attributed to its intrinsic merits.

Upon Jonson the result of the quarrel of which the *Satiromastix* marks the climax was, as has been seen, to divert his genius for a time from its most appropriate field. Dekker, on the other hand, in the next of his plays which has been preserved once more moves in his most proper sphere. The Britain of *Olde Fortunatus* had been as imaginary as its Cyprus; but in *The Honest Whore* we are brought face

Dekker (and Middleton ?)'s The Honest Whore (Part I pr. 1604; Part II 1630).

to face with the realities of London life. In this play, from a notice in Henslowe's Diary, Middleton appears to have been associated with Dekker, though Part I was printed in 1604 with the name of the latter only; of Part II we have no earlier impression than that of 1630. Dekker has here dealt with the most loathsome of these realities; and it is accordingly impossible to do more than touch upon the subject of what is justly regarded as one of the most remarkable of the works of our minor Elisabethan dramatists, though I am not inclined from a literary point of view to assign to it a very high eminence. This play consists of two Parts; or rather we have before us two plays (printed respectively in 1604 and 1630), each with a plot of its own, but with the same leading characters and an identical moral. This moral may be one which it was peculiarly wholesome to enforce in an age capable of visiting its worst vices with the plainest rebuke; and it must be allowed that the lesson is brought home not only with the utmost directness of speech, but also with unmistakeable honesty of purpose. But the plots of both Parts are rudely constructed; the parallel scenes of the Bedlam in Part I and the Bridewell in Part II are unbearably realistic[1]; and the execution is altogether of revolting coarseness. The touches of pathos are in my judgment surprisingly few[2]; not that it could be expected that a dramatist of this age should have treated such a subject with the tenderness of feeling which could alone have sweetened it; but Dekker obviously trusts to the strength of his rhetoric rather than to the effect of his situations, and indeed spoils the very height of the interest in Part II by substituting a dialectical contest for what ought to have been a representation of a moral struggle. The comic underplot of the patient husband Candido is far from being pleasant enough to relieve the revolting character of the main action.

[1] Cf. for the madhouse scene Fletcher's *Pilgrim* (iv. 3).

[2] Among them may be mentioned Part I, sc. x, and the passage in Part II, noticed by Charles Lamb, in which poor Bellafront contrasts the picture of virgin purity with that of her own polluted past. Hazlitt has justly dwelt on the character of Orlando Friscobaldo (Bellafront's father) in Part II as furnishing very great opportunities for the actor.

Among the other extant plays in which no share is claimed for any other writer but Dekker the next in date bears the odd title *If it be not good, the Divel is in it* (printed 1612). The personage in question *is* in this comedy, and not only he but several of his agents and several of his victims as well—among the latter Ravaillac (whose bloody deed was still fresh in men's memories), Guy Faux, and a 'Ghost, coal-black,' who proves insupportable even to the assembly among which he claims admittance. Such were the playful amenities by which the stage avenged itself upon its Puritan opponents. The intrigue of this comedy shows forth the doings of the emissaries of darkness at the Court of Alphonso King of Naples, who after beginning his reign with good intentions sufficient to pave the very domicile of the evil spirits, in consequence of their wiles very nearly ends as a 'Neronist.' The drama is otherwise of an ordinary type. The same may be said of the 'tragi-comedy' of *Match mee in London* (printed 1631[1]), and of the comedy of *The Wonder of a Kingdome*[2] (printed 1636).

Dekker's If it be not good, &c. (pr. 1612).

Match me in London (pr. 1631). The Wonder of a Kingdom. (pr. 1636).

The above comprise all the extant plays in which Dekker appears to have worked without a coadjutor. He also wrote the *Device of King James's Pageant* already mentioned (except the part written by Ben Jonson and threescore lines contributed by Middleton), and those of three other civic pageants calling for no special notice.

Dekker's Pageants.

In the remaining plays (and in one mask) associated with Dekker's name he was assisted by, or himself assisted, other writers. I shall not attempt to determine the relative share of his contributions, and of that of his coadjutors, in most of these productions. The comedy of *Patient Grissil* (printed 1603) seems to have been the joint work of himself, Chettle, and Haughton; and has been already spoken

Joint plays in which Dekker had a share.

Patient Grissil.

[1] The meaning of the title is: Can even London be worse than this? The play tells the story of a chaste citizen's wife, Tormiella, and a ruthless King.

[2] The contrast in this play is between prodigality (Torrenti, 'the riotous lord') and splendid munificence (Jacomo Gentili, 'the noble House-keeper').

of among Chettle's works[1]. Two of its lyrics have been thought traceable to Dekker. The extraordinary production entitled *The Whore of Babylon* (printed 1607) was published with Dekker's name only; but Henslowe states Middleton to have written part of it, an assertion which Mr. Dyce considers to be confirmed by internal evidence[2]. This play cannot be passed over without mention—not because of the very slender merits it possesses, but because of the characteristic illustration furnished by it both of the extreme vigour of political feeling which must have continued to animate the public against Rome and Spain at the time of its appearance, and of the extreme crudeness with which the public was content to see great events presented on the stage, even after the historical drama had reached so high a point of developement. This play is a clumsy allegory on the subject of the Spanish Armada and of the plots against Elisabeth which had preceded it—not one whit more advanced in execution than Bishop Bale's *Kyng Johan*. Spenser's poem had evidently inspired the authors with the notion of introducing Queen Elisabeth as 'Titania the Fairy Queen;' and the name of the evil Satyran must be borrowed from the same source. Nothing could be more crude than this farrago of history and declamation; and no ambition could have been less warranted than that of its authors, who protest very strongly against their work being judged according to its presentment by the players, who spoil good plays as 'ill nurses' spoil 'the children of a beautiful woman.' This play may have come down to us in an imperfect and mutilated form; but in any case it is with a pitiful sense of contrast that one throws aside this counterpart in subject, but in nothing else, of the Athenian poet's immortal dramatic record of the other Great Armada of the world's history. Passages of some spirit are not wanting in Dekker and Middleton's

Dekker and Middleton's (?) The Whore of Babylon pr. 1607).

[1] Vol. i. p. 232.—In an appreciative article on Dekker, by Mr. J. A. Symonds, in *The Academy*, Feb. 7, 1874, it is said that this comedy contains Dekker's most charming lyric—I presume the charming 'Art thou poor,' &c., which Mr. Swinburne, who likewise ascribes it to Dekker (in his essay on Ford), enumerates among the 'outbreaks of birdlike or godlike song' in our dramatists.

[2] See Dekker's *Works*, vol. ii. p. 369.

play; but these are found side by side with the baldest prose struggling into verse[1]; and the whole treatment is as feeble as the subject is mighty.

Dekker and Webster's Sir Thomas Wyat (pr. 1607).

Hardly more effective, though incomparably less ambitious, is *The Famous Historie of Sir Thomas Wyat* (printed 1607), ascribed to the joint authorship of Dekker and Webster. It should however be remarked with reference to what we possess of this production, that it has been conjectured by Mr. Dyce to be merely the mutilated abridgment of a play called *Ladye Jane*[2], mentioned by Henslowe under the year 1602 as written by 'Mr. Dickers, Chettell, Smythe, Webester, and Hewoode;' a second part being mentioned in the same year, with notice of a small payment 'in earneste' of it to Dekker only. Under these circumstances one may spare oneself any criticism on the general character of the tragedy; and it will suffice to remark that the pathetic element in the situation of the innocent victims of ambition (Guildford and Lady Jane Grey) is not lost sight of, while the authors have humour enough to see the comic side of the very natural feeling—hatred of Spain—typified by the hero of the piece[3].

[1] Among the former may be instanced the vigorous lines in honour of Drake:

'Thus they give out, that you sent forth a *Drake*,
Which from their rivers beat their water-fowl,
Tore silver feathers from their fairest swans,
And plucked the Halcyons' wings that rove at sea,
And made their wild-ducks under water dive,
So long, that some never came up alive,' &c.

Another passage may be quoted in contrast:

'The standing camp of horsemen and of foot,
These numbers fill. Lances 253. Horsemen 769.
Footmen 22,000. The moving army, which attends on you,
Is thus made up: of horsemen and foot, Lancers 481.
Light horsemen 1421. Footmen 34,050.'

[2] See *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 242–3; quoted in Dekker's *Works*, iii. 369. Cf. Dyce's Introduction to the play in his edition of Webster's *Works*.

[3] At least this strikes me as very humorous:

'*Bret.* Philip is a Spaniard, and what is a Spaniard?

Clown. A Spaniard is no Englishman, that I know.

Bret. Right; a Spaniard is a Camocho, a Callimanco, nay which is worse a Dondego, and what is a Dondego?

Clown. A Dondego is a kind of Spanish stock-fish or poor John.

Bret. No, a Dondego is a desperate Viliago, a very Castilian, God bless us.'

Dekker and Webster's Westward Ho and Northward Ho (pr. 1607).

Webster was also associated with Dekker in the composition of two comedies, *Westward Hoe* and *Northward Hoe* (both printed 1607), over which I pass, though the kind of character and the species of humour which they exhibit are thoroughly in consonance with Dekker's manner. They are very offensive pictures of the fashions of the City ladies, whom Dekker and his contemporaries loved to satirise, and who it appears, when in search of dissipation, were wont to take boat for Brentford or horse for Ware. How much of exaggeration such pictures, which are almost on a level with the worst scenes ever represented on the English stage, contain, it is unnecessary to enquire[1]. In *The Roaring Girle* Middleton co-operated with Dekker, and apart from the fact that the name of the former is mentioned first on the title-page, the general character of the writing seems to point to his having had the principal share in it.

Middleton and Dekker's The Roaring Girl.

Massinger and Dekker's Virgin Martyr.

Dekker's name was also coupled with that of Massinger on the title-page of *The Virgin Martir* (printed 1622), and with those of Ford, Rowley, and an inviting '&c.' on that of *The Witch of Edmonton* (printed 1658). In the former play it has been customary to assign the main share to Massinger, among whose works it will be briefly noticed below. In *The Witch of Edmonton* it requires I think no very nice eye to distinguish Ford's poetic touch and soft sentiment from Dekker's coarser hand; and as it is in the scenes occupied with the Witch and the witchcraft that the least attractive part of the play is to be found, it may be reserved for notice among Ford's works. But Dekker very possibly helped to contrive and heighten the effect of many of the elements of terror and pity in this very powerful drama. Lastly, Ford and Dekker also worked together in

Ford, Dekker, and others' The Witch of Edmonton.

[1] *Northward Hoe* contains a passage (the account of Stourbridge Fair with the remark 'I could make an excellent description of it in a comedy') which might possibly be thought to have attracted the notice of Ben Jonson, whose *Bartholomew Fair* appeared in 1614. Mr. Dyce (who points out the allusion to *Westward Hoe* in the Prologue to Chapman and Marston's *Eastward Hoe*) appears to me to judge too favourably of these two plays in describing them as 'though by no means pure,' yet 'comparatively little stained by that grossness from which none of our old comedies are entirely free.'

the production of a 'moral mask,' called *The Sun's Darling* (printed 1656), which seems to have obtained great popularity. I should be inclined to follow the judgment of one who is himself a master of musical effect in regarding the extant text of this mask as 'a recast by Ford of an earlier mask by Dekker,—probably as Mr. Collier has suggested his lost play of *Phaeton*[1].' It will therefore suffice here to call attention to the felicitous *conception* of this mask. Raybright the son and darling of Phoebus passes through the four seasons of the year, which allegorise the stages of life; and the moral is, that instead of following from first to last the dictates of 'Folly' and 'Human,' ever seeking for something new, man should endeavour to harmonise his life with the powers granted him by Heaven, and while reverencing Nature, honour the Power which makes him more enduring than her.

Dekker and Ford's The Sun's Darling (pr. 1656).

Dekker (who already in 1597 had been employed by Henslowe to make certain 'adycyons' to Marlowe's *Faustus*) worked in conjunction with other writers on several plays besides those mentioned above, as appears from notices in the *Diary*. None of these however is identifiable with any extant play, except, perhaps, *The Spanish Moor's Tragedy*[2], produced in 1600, which is thought to be no other than the tragedy of *Lust's Dominion*, not printed till 1657, and formerly ascribed to Marlowe. If so, the play was a joint production by Haughton, Day, and Dekker, who are mentioned as the joint authors of *The Spanish Moor's Tragedy*. The piece, which in parts is equal if not superior to anything undoubtedly from Dekker's hand, seems at all events written in direct imitation of Marlowe's manner. The whole conception of the villain Eleazar very closely resembles that of Barabas the Jew of Malta, and the fire of the opening recalls the most passionate of the earlier Elisabethans in his rapturous moments. Eleazar is like Barabas a diligent student of a book (v. 6), which can be no other than

Haughton, Day, and Dekker's The Spanish Moor's Tragedy, or Lust's Dominion (?) (acted 1600).

[1] See Mr. Swinburne's Essay on Ford in *The Fortnightly Review*, July, 1871.

[2] Printed in *Old Plays* (*Continuation of Dodsley*), vol. i.

Macchiavelli's, and the final curse with which he quits life reminds one of that uttered by the baffled Jew of Marlowe's play. The characters of the friars Cole and Crab seem to have been suggested by the same model. The versification too resembles Marlowe's, at least in the earlier part of the play, which at the close loses itself in an almost endless accumulation of villainies. Altogether, however, the similarities are precisely of the kind to be looked for in a copy; and the external evidence against Marlowe's authorship is therefore by no means contradicted by the internal. I find nothing in *Lust's Dominion* which there seems reason for assigning to Dekker individually[1].

Dekker as a dramatist.

After the above enumeration of Dekker's extant plays it is not necessary to appeal to the titles of those lost in order to show his prolific activity as a dramatist. His literary life may fairly be reckoned among the many illustrations of the difficulty of combining rapid and constant production with lasting excellence. His was no genius to mould unconsciously into fair poetic forms such inspirations as were given to him. Though his lyrical gifts were considerable, though he was master of a vigorous if not elevated rhetoric[2], and though his natural humour, which shows itself at its height in his earliest extant comedy, seems to have been constantly fed by lively observation, he produced no one dramatic work of a high order. It is perhaps in isolated passages rather than in the sustained effects of characters or situations that he

[1] Cf. vol. i. p. 201. *Lust's Dominion* attracted by its subject the sympathies of Mrs. Aphra Behn, but in justice to her, it must be conceded that in her *Abdelazer, or the Moor's Revenge* (1677) she has rather softened than intensified the passionate language of the original. From *Abdelazer* Young borrowed the outlines of his *Revenge* (1721); cf. Geneste, i. 216.—It may be thought worth noticing that in *Lust's Dominion* 'Oberon and Fairies' are introduced, to forewarn the heroine of her end (iii. 3).

[2] Dekker's style was in truth very far removed from that commended by Chapman in a fine passage of his *Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* (act i):

> 'Worthiest poets
> Shun common and plebeian forms of speech,
> Every illiberal . . . . phrase
> To clothe their matter: and together tie
> Matter and form, with Art and decency.'

displays elements of real tragic power; for at times his pathos is beyond doubt singularly sudden and direct. A fuller measure of success he only commands within a limited sphere. In this, though the grossness of his realism makes it impossible for a more refined age to dwell with unalloyed pleasure on his pictures of contemporary life, the unaffected healthiness of his spirit and the vigour of his comic genius are beyond dispute. What can I see, asks the son of Fortunatus, in mine own country? You may see, answers his interlocutor, 'things enough, for what can you see abroad that is not at home? The same Sun calls you up in the morning, and the same man in the Moon lights you to bed at night, our fields are as green as theirs in summer, and their frosts will nip us in winter. Our birds sing as sweetly and our women are as fair.' And though Dekker seems to prefer to dwell on aspects of his native land different from these, yet there is a healthy endeavour in him to take human nature at least as he finds it, and to reproduce his impressions and tell his truths with simple directness rather than seek for artificial effects by attempting flights beyond his range. He is as homely in his moral teaching as he is downright in his exemplification of vice; but there is in him no affectation of being more than he is. His plays are among those most characteristic of the ways of thought and feeling belonging to his age; and while generally rude in form,—alternating between prose, blank-verse, and rhyme (to which last he seems very prone),—they are for the most part full of genuine dramatic life, strong in their drawing of character, and spirited if uneven in their execution. A life of hard rubs with fortune well accords with a genius of rough but not unkindly vigour; and though much that Dekker has written may remain outside the range of what our age can bring itself to enjoy, we need not deny him the respect due to a manly mind gifted with a genuine though limited creative power.

His healthiness and vigour.

The names of Dekker and Marston are as ominously linked together as those of Bavius and Maevius; but Jonson

himself took care to discriminate in his attack upon the pair, whose literary qualities differ not less than their outward circumstances appear to have done.

John Marston (1585 *circ.*–1634 ?).

Of JOHN MARSTON'S[1] personal life little is known; and that little rests merely on his supposed identity with the one or the other of two namesakes mentioned by Antony à Wood. The more probable hypothesis seems to be that the dramatist was the John Marston of Coventry who early in 1594 was admitted B.A. at Oxford from Brasenose, of which college he was a gentleman-commoner. This personage is described as the son of an esquire, which, as Mr. Halliwell has pointed out, agrees with Jonson's allusion to the respectability of his antagonist's birth[2]. The John Marston in question again appears to be manifestly the same as the John Marston of Coventry of whom Wood speaks as married to the daughter of a Wiltshire rector and chaplain to King James I of the name of Wilkes. This supposition in its turn tallies with Jonson's facetious statement to Drummond that 'Marston wrott his father-in-lawes preachings, and his father-in-law his commedies.' The John Marston of Coventry died on June 25, 1634, and, says Wood, 'was buried in the church belonging to the Temple in London, near to the body of John Marston his father, sometimes a Counsellor of the Middle Temple,' 'under the stone which hath written on it Oblivioni Sacrum[3].' His will is preserved; and in it he is styled *clarke*, probably, as Mr. Halliwell thinks, merely in reference to his academical degree.

His literary life and quarrels.

According to Wood, the John Marston who seems thus identifiable with the dramatist, soon after completing his degree, 'went his way, and improved his learning in other faculties.' This again answers to the date of the work with which, so far as we know, Marston made his first appearance in the literary world. *The Scourge of Villainie,*

[1] *The Works of John Marston. With Notes, and some Account of his Life and Writings.* By J. O. Halliwell. 3 vols. London, 1856.

[2] 'His father was a man of worship, I tell thee.' *The Poetaster,* iii. 1.

[3] I learn that of this tomb no traces remain.

to the name of which Jonson alludes in *Every Man out of his Humour*[1], was first printed in 1598, and was followed in the same year by *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image and certain Satyres*, published under the assumed name of William Kinsayder[2]. Of these productions it will be sufficient to say that *The Metamorphosis* has all the lubricity, with none of the fire, of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*[3], while *The Scourge* and the *Satires* have all the truculence, with little, so far as I have observed, of the wit of Hall. With Hall, whose Satires are indisputably to be reckoned among the most remarkable productions of their times, Marston had, for some reason unknown, become involved in a long-enduring feud, and in the *Satyre IV* (entitled *Reactio*) he endeavours to retort upon his adversary as Grillus, a

'Vain envious detractor from the good,'

who has ventured to rail against poets sacred and profane, ancient and modern, academical and otherwise, even (*credite, posteri!*)

'At Hopkins, Sternhold, and the Scottish King.'

But, notwithstanding his ambition to be accounted a man of letters, Marston also seems at an early date in his career to have found it necessary to resort for a livelihood to work as a playwright; for in 1599 we find him receiving a small advance from Henslowe, for some nameless play. It may have been that called *Columbus*, for which, as Marston informs Henslowe in a letter without date, he afterwards received a handsome offer from the rival company (the King's). This company certainly acted one of his extant plays (*The Malcontent*); but the supposition seems improbable, as he is hardly likely to have kept Henslowe waiting for four years. The first of his plays which have come

[1] ii. 1.

[2] See below as to *What You Will*. Marston is apostrophised as 'Monsieur Kinsayder' in *The Returne from Pernassus* (i. 2).

[3] It was accordingly suppressed by order of Whitgift and Bancroft, who exercised the censorship as Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of London. The poem unmistakeably shows Marston to have been a reader of Italian poetry.

down to us (*Antonio and Mellida*) was published in 1602; the last[1] (*What You Will*) in 1607.

The last-mentioned drama, as will be seen below, shows Marston still in the midst of a hot literary controversy with his old opponent Hall; but to this adversary had previously been added another of a still more redoubtable kind. What little is known as to Marston's quarrel with Ben Jonson has been already noted[2]. It seems to have subsided at the beginning of the new reign; for in 1604 Marston dedicated his *Malcontent* to Jonson in flattering terms; and when the former in the same year was, in consequence of the comedy of *Eastward Hoe*—produced by him conjointly with Chapman—sent to prison together with his fellow-author, they were joined there by Ben Jonson, who had taken no part in the offence committed, but was in some way associated with the composition or production of the play containing it[3]. In 1605 some encomiastic verses by Marston were prefixed to Jonson's *Sejanus*. Whether or not Marston afterwards repented him of the reconciliation[4], it has been seen how at a subsequent date Jonson gave vent to sentiments of cordial hatred of his old antagonist.

His entertainments.

Nothing further is known of Marston, except that, in addition to the dramas to be immediately noticed, he composed an entertainment for Lord and Lady Huntingdon's reception of their mother the Countess Dowager of Derby; a very humorous mask, called *The Mountebank's Mask*, produced at Gray's Inn not before 1600[5]; and a City Pageant for the visit of King Christian IV of Denmark in 1606. The text of the last of these productions is in Latin,—another proof of Marston's academical scholarship. A few lyrics by him have also been preserved. Of his relations to other contemporary dramatists nothing is known beyond what may be gathered from the above notes.

[1] Of *The Insatiate Countess* an edition of 1603 seems to have existed.

[2] Vol. i. p. 522.

[3] Vol. i. p. 525.

[4] Cf. *infra* as to *Sophonisba*.

[5] Edited by Mr. Collier for the Shakespeare Society (*Publ.* 1848). Of its kind this mask is excellent; but the humour is of the broadest description.

His tragedies:

Antonio and Mellida (acted by 1601

Of Marston's extant plays, the earliest is chiefly to be remembered as having furnished Jonson with so suitable a supply of materials for satire in his *Poetaster*[1]. *Antonio and Mellida* (acted in or before 1601; printed 1602) must be allowed to go far towards justifying both of the uncomplimentary appellations bestowed upon the burlesque representative of its author by his angry adversary, who seems among the plays produced up to that time by Marston to have looked upon this as specially inviting satire. Jonson's Crispinus is saluted as both 'poetaster and plagiary;' and in truth there is little in *Antonio and Mellida* that is either truly poetical or properly speaking original. The story may have itself been taken direct from some Italian source[2]; but it is not of course to this probability that I refer in charging the author with plagiarism. The Second of the two Parts of which the play (though it is of no great length) consists is in manner of treatment, and in the general character of several of its situations, a reflex of *The Spanish Tragedy* and of (the earlier) *Hamlet*[3]. The construction of the First Part is far from skilful.

Part I.

Of these two Parts the First ends happily, having dealt, as the hero observes at the close, with 'the comic crosses of true love.' The true love in question is that of Antonio, son of Andrugio Duke of Genoa, and Mellida, daughter of Piero Duke of Venice. After a dull Induction, in which the chief characters present themselves to the audience 'with parts in their hands, having cloaks cast over their apparel,' the play opens with a vigorous rush *in medias res*. Andrugio having been wholly routed by Piero, and the latter having set a price on the heads of both father and

[1] iii. 1; v. 1; and cf. Gifford's notes. Chapman, in his *May-Day* (act iv), parodistically introduces a passage *from Antonio and Mellida.*

[2] Besides the numerous snatches of Italian, the appellation of *Nutriche* consistently given to the Nurse seems to point to this supposition.

[3] For several very striking resemblances of situation to *Hamlet*, see act iii. of Part II. For a plagiarism of detail see Part I, iii. 3, where 'Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just' (2 Henry VI, iii. 2) is expounded into Marstonian bombast.—It is only fair to note the murder by Antonio of the innocent boy Julio (Part II, iii. 3) as a powerful and probably original situation; but it is not carried out with much ability.

son, Antonio has, in order to seek out his mistress, assumed the disguise of an Amazon, in which he appears at Piero's Court. Mellida escapes in the habit of a page, but is retaken by her father. Finally, Andrugio, after meeting his son only in order to behold him apparently fall dead at the tidings of Mellida's capture, offers himself as a victim to the Duke of Venice, when to all seeming Piero relents and the complication is brought to a happy end.

Part II: Antonio's Revenge.

But the Second Part, which is called *Antonio's Revenge*, and is prefaced by a Prologue of appropriately awful diction[1], promptly undeceives the hopes of inexperience. Of a sudden we find ourselves in the midst of a dense jungle of crimes. Duke Piero reveals himself with startling abruptness as a thorough-paced villain, entering 'unbraced, his armes bare, smeared in blood, a poniard in one hand bloody, and a torch in the other.' He has slain a former lover of his daughter, and orders the corpse to be placed by her side, to convict her of unfaithfulness to Antonio, whose father Andrugio he has likewise despatched. Having, as he observes, 'no reason to be reasonable,' he further plots the death and dishonour of Antonio, besides securing for himself the hand and affections of Antonio's mother, Andrugio's widow Maria. Mellida falls a victim to the tyrant's devices, and Antonio prepares for revenge. To this he is further incited by his father's ghost, as well as by those of other victims of Piero; and in order to conceal his intentions he assumes the habit of a fool. The action, helped on by a dumb show and the ghost's announcement of a grand alliance of the Italian Powers against the

[1] These are the opening lines (phrases in which are ridiculed by Ben Jonson, and of which I leave the spelling intact)—

'The rawish danke of clumzie winter ramps
The fluent summers vaine; and drizling sleete
Chilleth the wan bleak cheek of the numd earth,
Whilst snarling gusts nibble the juyceles leaves,
From the nak't shuddring branch; and pils the skinne
From off the soft and delicate aspectes.
O now, me thinks, a sullen tragick sceane
Would suite the time, with pleasing congruence.
May we be happie in our weake devoyer,' &c.

tyrant, now reaches its climax; and the 'poor orphan,' as he is repeatedly called, duly achieves his revenge.

Antonio and Mellida.

This outline will suffice to show to what kind of dramas *Antonio and Mellida* properly belongs. The comic scenes are ambitious, but feeble; Rossaline is a poor copy—conscious or unconscious—of Shakspere's Beatrice; Balurdo 'a wealthy mountebanking burgomasco's heir[1]' and the rest of the courtiers are barely amusing. The diction is full of affectations and absurdities. Latin quotations as well as passages in Italian[2] abound; and the author seems singularly devoid of a sense of appropriateness in his diction as well as in his sentiments. He cannot escape from the commonplace except by far-fetched allusions or sheer rant[3]; and there is perhaps only a single fault of which it would be unjust to accuse this play, for it is altogether too surprising to be dull.

The subject of *The Insatiate Countesse* (said to have been

[1] In act v. of Part I, by the bye, Balurdo gives a more direct imitation of Lyly than I remember to have noticed in any similar satirical reproduction of the euphuistic manner.

[2] See especially act iv. of Part I.—The '*Vindicta, vindicta!*' in Fletcher's *Fair Maid of the Inn* may be intended in ridicule either of *Antonio's Revenge* or of *Locrine*, in both of which the exclamation occurs.

[3] The reference to '*Pythagorean axioms*' (Part II, iii. 3) may pass, and the Nurse's quotation from *Aristotle's Problems* (*ib.* 4) is from a popular chapbook (see Halliwell's note, i. 301). But it is absurd to make Antonio, 'in his sea gown running,' pause to give the audience 'an instance' of a metaphysical observation, though the instance is very charmingly expressed:

> 'As having clasp'd a rose
> Within my palm, the rose being ta'en away,
> My hand retains a little breath of sweet:
> So may man's trunk, his spirit slipp'd away,
> Hold still a faint perfume of his sweet guest.'
>
> (Part I, act iv.)

That the inevitable Macchiavelli does not escape without mention need hardly be observed (see Part II, iv. 1). Of the rant I may spare the reader instances; but it may be noted that Marston's bombast is far less sustained in its character than Marlowe's or Kyd's. Occasionally we find passages like this (Part II, iv. 3):

> (*Piero*) 'I'll conquer Rome,
> Pop out the light of bright religion,
> And then, helter skelter, all cocksure.'

Cf. Antonio's description of the tempest on the sea, Part I, act i.

The Insatiate Countess (pr. 1603?).

printed 1603; the first extant edition bears date 1613) is sufficiently described by the title of the play. Such characters as Isabella have probably existed, and the type is familiar to readers of Tacitus and Gibbon. The age in which Marston wrote was unhappily signalised by the shamelessness of some of its women as well as of its men; but nothing can excuse the creation of such a figure in a work of the imagination. A moral monstrosity such as the Isabella of this play is a subject as unfitting for poetic treatment as is a physical monstrosity for treatment by the sculptor's or painter's art. There is nothing more horrible of the kind in imaginative literature, — except perhaps the would-be mistress of Victor Hugo's *Homme qui rit*. Nor is the comparison forced; for Marston's play is, like the romance with which I have paralleled it, a brilliant composition—in none of his plays has he in my opinion reached so high a level of poetic diction; and there are two scenes, representing respectively the beginning and the close of Isabella's career of vice, of remarkable dramatic effectiveness. In the latter of these, the man whom she had wedded on the death of her first husband reappears in the 'friar's weeds' which he had assumed on his desertion by her, to bid farewell to her on the scaffold. He at last awakens in her a movement of repentance; and thus, after the executioner has bid her veil her sinful eyes[1], she dies. It is extraordinary that the author should have allowed himself to weaken the awful effect of this scene by bringing to a laborious close, after instead of before it, the complications

[1] '*Exec.* Madame, I must entreat you, blind your eyes.
Isa. I have lived too long in darkness, my friend;
And yet mine eyes, with their majestic light,
Have got new muses in a poet's sprite.
They have been more gazed at than the god of day:
Their brightness never could be flattered,
Yet thou command'st a fixed cloud of lawn
To eclipse eternally these minutes of light.
What else?
Exec. Now, madame, all's done,
And when you please, I'll execute my office.'

There is something of Webster in this.

of a bye-plot in itself sufficiently offensive. A beautiful simile in the closing speech[1] cannot reconcile us to this inadequate close of a play which, though intolerable in the subject of its action, contains more beauties of detail than occur in any other of its author's works.

The Wonder of Women, or Sophonisba (pr. 1606).

The Wonder of Women, or The Trajedie of Sophonisba (printed 1606) presents itself with that modesty—or assumption of modesty—which Marston seems to have taken a peculiar pleasure in exhibiting. Notwithstanding the opinion of weighty authorities to the contrary, it seems difficult not to suppose the address 'to the General Reader,' which disclaims any special endeavour on the part of the author 'to transcribe authors, quote authorities, and translate Latine prose Orations into English blank verse' to imply a sneer against Jonson, who had done all these things in his *Sejanus*. Marston in *Sophonisba* certainly proceeds on a system considerably easier to both reader and author. This tragedy is merely one of the many dramatic versions of a story well adapted to dramatic treatment[2], without any original elements of a nature to add to its interest. Marston has treated it with the realism characteristic of his age[3], and has added an episode—that of the witch Erictho—of grotesque novelty. Rant serves in lieu of passion, and a peculiarly ample supply of commonplace reflexions (apparently italicised for the reader's

[1] 'Night, like a mask, is enter'd heaven's great hall
With thousand torches ushering the way.'

A finely expressed thought in an earlier scene of the same act—

'Divines and dying men may talk of hell,
But in my heart the several torments dwell'—

recalls similar passages in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (cf. vol. i. p. 182).

[2] It may be supposed to have been treated in *Cipio Africanus*, acted at Whitehall in 1580, which may be identical with the conjectural *Scipio* in Peele's enumeration of popular tragedies (cf. vol. i. p. 113). Of later tragedies on the subject of Sophonisba, Lee's and Thomson's will be briefly noticed below.

[3] The *ne plus ultra* of realistic description is reached in Erictho's account of the ruined temple (iv. 1). But the whole proceedings of Syphax are as grossly painted as they could be by a writer perhaps incapable of giving a really forcible picture even of purely bestial passion.

benefit[1]) furnishes a species of proverbial philosophy. The whole production is thoroughly second-rate.

Marston's comedies: The Malcontent (pr. 1604).

The remainder of Marston's extant plays are comedies.

The Malcontent (printed 1604, with the dedication to Ben Jonson already referred to) was republished in the year of its first impression with additions due in part to the more powerful hand of Webster. It is not however known which of these additions were by him; but he is generally supposed to have written the Induction, which introduces Burbadge and other actors, but is otherwise commonplace enough. There is accordingly no warrant for refusing to Marston the credit of many of the most striking passages in this play—which hardly any of his other plays seems to me to approach in its occasional condensed vigour of expression—however much one may be tempted to assign them to Webster. And there is at least one passage of truly powerful writing not belonging to the additions, and therefore undoubtedly attributable to Marston, which illustrates the difficulty of trusting too much to the guidance of instinct in discriminating between the supposed 'touch' of different poets[2].

The hero of this comedy is Giovanni Altofronto, sometime Duke of Genoa, who, having been deprived of his throne, under the assumed name of Malevole gains the confidence of the usurper by a misanthropical frankness, not to say brutality, of speech; and is thus enabled at once to hasten and countermine the plots of the minion of the usurper's Duchess, Mendoza. The last-named villain, who has sought to crown his imaginary triumph by securing the hand of the rightful Duke's supposed widow, is thus in the end overthrown; and the weak Pietro gladly resigns his honours to his preserver. The plot, which winds through a variety of other complications, ends very effectively by the appearance in a mask of all the conspirators against

[1] At least I presume the italics which distinguish these gems to be transferred by Mr. Halliwell from the old editions.

[2] See Malevole's speech (iii. 2 in Halliwell; iii. 1 in Dyce's Webster) beginning 'I cannot sleep.'

Mendoza, and his seizure by them. But he is spared by Malevole Altofronto, who in a concluding speech of considerable originality dismisses all the chief characters with appropriate verbal passports.

There is, as already remarked, a degree of vigour in this play beyond what is usual to Marston; its action proceeds with effective rapidity; and the diction is characterised by force, and frequently by an epigrammatic pointedness[1]. The wit of this comedy would appear to have caused an endeavour to seek in many of its passages a 'private sense,' against which the author protests in a curious 'imperfect Ode, being but one stave spoken by the *Prologue;*' it is therefore needless to seek any reference, such as might be easily suspected, to the Court of James in the five lines spoken by Malevole in the last scene. In the character of Malevole himself Marston might have found an opportunity for producing a masterpiece; but he can hardly be said, even with Webster's assistance, to have achieved any noteworthy success in this direction; and his Malevole sinks into unreality by the side of Shaksperean figures with which it has elements in common, by the side above all of a Timon or of a Prospero. Indeed, as a character the feeble Pietro, the usurper, seems to me to be more strikingly true to nature; though the conception of the relation between Malevole and the personages on whom he works is probably in itself psychologically correct.

Parasitaster, or The Fawne (printed 1606) is in subject a kind of side-piece to *The Malcontent.* Duke Hercules of Ferrara (a historical personage, though there is probably

Parasitaster, or the Fawn (pr. 1606).

[1] '*Cel.* How stands Mendoza—how is 't with him?

Mal. Faith, like a pair of snuffers—snibs filth in other men, and retains it in itself.' (iii. 3.)

Or again (iii. 4):

'*Men.* When we are duke, I 'll make thee some great man, sure.

Mal. Nay, make me some rich knave, and I 'll make myself some great man.'

Nor is Bilioso (the comic diplomatist of the play)'s definition of a principle of ecclesiastical government familiar to the seventeenth century unworthy of quotation:

'*Mal.* What religion will you be of now?

Bil. Of the duke's religion, when I know what it is.'

no historical foundation for what is here represented of his doings) has sent his son Tiberio, hitherto averse from marriage, to the Court of Urbino, to woo the Princess Dulcimel in his father's name. Duke Hercules himself, in order to watch the conduct of his son and generally to gratify his own humour for a change, assumes the disguise of Faunus, a parasite. By his adroit flattery of everybody with whom he comes into contact, and especially of Duke Gonzago of Urbino, himself 'a weak Lord of a self-admiring wisdom,' he makes himself a general favourite. But the character of the Fawn has little or no influence upon the course of the action, which is what might be naturally expected. Tiberio of course falls in love himself when he ought to be merely acting as a proxy; and Dulcimel, who returns, or indeed anticipates, his passion, contrives with genuine female adroitness to make her father, who strongly objects to Tiberio's passion, himself serve as an instrument in the advancement of her amours. The play is not unentertaining, but the blandishments of the Fawn are devoid of any element distinguishing them from the commonplace arts of a parasite; and what little humour of character the piece possesses is to be sought in the important self-conceit of Duke Gonzago. The bye-plot between Don Zuccone and his wife Donna Zoya may have entertained the audience; any severe criticism from the reader the author, with his usual professions of modesty, expressly deprecates. 'Comedies,' he says, 'are writ to be spoken, not read;' and such enjoyment as can be derived from a work like *The Fawne* springs from its merits as a successful 'acting' play. Marston was happier in choice of subjects than in execution; but he knew the taste of his audience, and had enough dramatic sense to recognise the importance of what he truly describes as 'the life of these things,' *viz.* action.

The Dutch Courtesan pr. 1605.

The Dutch Courtezan (printed 1605) is a comedy of high merit. Its plot, the general character of which is very succinctly summarised by the author[1], is not of a nature to

[1] '*Fabulae Argumentum.* The difference betwixt the love of a courtesan and a wife, is the full scope of the play, which, intermixed with the deceits of a witty city jester, fills up the comedy.'

admit of description here; and there is a degree of harshness in the contrast offered which will be justly resented by a refined taste. But the aim of the play is thoroughly moral; and there is considerable psychological force in the character of Malheureux, first the self-righteous counsellor of a thoughtless but well-intentioned friend, and afterwards himself the victim of an evil passion, from which he is only rescued by a daring device. The two sisters, Beatrice and Crispinella, are drawn with much dramatic effectiveness, the resemblance between them and the cousins in *Much Ado about Nothing* being far too vague to warrant any charge of want of originality[1]. In the bearing of Beatrice on receiving the tidings of the death of her betrothed there is much true feeling[2]. And little Crispinella (though even less choice in her language than Shakspere's Beatrice) is one of the most sparkling figures of Elisabethan comedy, and in adequate hands would prove a source of genuine delight to any audience[3]. The bye-plot is of the broadest kind of farce, consisting of the practical jokes and knaveries of Cocledemoy, described in the *dramatis personae* as 'a knavishly witty City companion,'—a type in truth of the heroes of the 'jests' which passed as wit in the Elisabethan age. His victims are Mr. and Mrs. Mulligrub, a vintner and his wife, who mingle the savour of the tavern with that of the tabernacle. The satire against Puritanism is however of a slight kind, though it seems to be dictated by a contemptuous dislike of demonstrative Protestantism

[1] For another resemblance to the same Shaksperean comedy see the scene (iv. 1) with the Watch, who after putting the wrong man in the stocks, depart with the following ejaculation on the part of their leader: 'Let's remember our duties, and let['s] go sleep, in the fear of God.' But this was a favourite comic resource. Cf. vol. i. p. 403.

[2] iv. 1.

[3] In such hands *e. g.* as those of an actress in whose beginnings the keen eye of Dickens (see Mr. Forster's *Life*) traced so exceptional a promise, and whose maturer efforts are justly the delight of our day. How well Miss Marie Wilton would understand to point Crispinella's periphrastic acceptance of her suitor (who has just been lamenting her disdainfulness, the effect of reading *Euphues* and other fashionable books): 'Nay, as for that, think on't as you will, but God's my record,—and my sister knows I have taken drink and slept upon't,—that if ever I marry, it shall be you; and I will marry, and yet I hope I do not say it shall be you neither.'

in general which is noticeable in Marston[1]. Mulligrub's 'last words,' when he believes himself on his way to the gallows, are an admirable summary of an 'honest tradesman's' way of setting his house in order[2].

Though the character who gives this comedy its name is as revolting as several of its scenes, it is in general written with singular lightness. Devoid neither of humour nor of pathos, and containing a considerable amount of genuine wit, while its plot is skilfully and lucidly constructed, this play is to be ranked among Marston's very happiest efforts, and contributes not a little to justify the reputation achieved by this very unequal writer.

What You Will (pr. 1607).

What You Will (printed 1607) has a certain literary interest, but is otherwise an ordinary comedy of intrigue. The 'error' on which the interest of the plot centres is one with which we have already met in other plays, and the original of which is probably to be sought in the *Amphitryo*. But the secondary intention of this 'slight-writ' play was to furnish the author with an opportunity for attacking an opponent in whom there is no difficulty in recognising Hall. This is manifest from the Induction, which in Jonsonian fashion brings on the stage three literary critics, Atticus, Doricus, and Phylomuse, and from the play itself. In a scene (ii. 1) which it is needless to examine in detail the author evidently identifies the poet Lampatho Doria with himself[3], and the foul-mouthed Quadratus, whom Lampatho threatens to 'rhyme dead' by a 'satire,' with his adversary Hall. Other allusions seem to invite conjectural solution; but as the basis of the satirical intention is uncertain (for the origin of the quarrel between

[1] From a passage in iii. 1 it would appear that already at this early date a technical force belonged to the epithet *methodical*, which word Mrs. Mulligrub says she got from 'Sir Aminadab Ruth.' Southey (*Life of Wesley* i. 42, note) adverts to the employment of the name *Methodist* by Calamy, who was one of the Smectymnus group.

[2] 'I do here make my confession: if I owe any man any thing, I do heartily forgive him; if any man owe me any thing, let him pay my wife.' When he is rescued, he exclaims, 'I could even weep for joy;' to which his wife adds, 'I could weep too, but God knows for what.' (v. 1.)

[3] 'Why, you Don Kynsayder!' says Quadratus, addressing Lampatho by a name actually assumed by Marston. Cf. *ante*, p. 53.

Hall and Marston is unknown), it is unnecessary to dwell further on a comedy the main interest of which must remain obscure.

With the addition of the admirable comedy of *Eastward Hoe*, written conjointly (in what proportions is not known) by Chapman and Marston, with some assistance from Jonson [1], the above exhaust the list of Marston's extant dramatic works.

Marston's achievements as a dramatist.

The loss of whatever other plays Marston may have written—and it can hardly be supposed that his productivity came to an end twenty years before his death—has possibly prejudiced his claims to a more distinguished rank than can be assigned to him among the later Elisabethan dramatists. It was his misfortune by his longest tragedy not only to furnish an opportunity for merited ridicule to one of his adversaries, but also to some extent to justify the charges brought by the other against the stage at large [2]. The blood and thunder which in Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* recall Marlowe and Kyd are enveloped in a bombast of terms as 'astounding' as theirs [3]; and in his two other tragedies, though he has learnt to moderate the extravagance of his phraseology, his imagination is still intent upon themes belonging to the reign of the morally grotesque.

[1] Noticed *ante*, p. 29.

[2] See Hall's *Satires*, i. 1, 3, 4.

[3] The author of *The Returne from Pernassus* is extremely severe on Marston's diction:

> 'Methinks he is a ruffian in his style;
> Withouten bands' or garters' ornament,
> He quaffs a cup of Frenchman's helicon,
> Then royster doyster in his oily terms,
> Cuts, thrusts, and foins at whomsoe'er he meets,
> And shews about Ram-alley meditations.
> . . . . . .
> Aye, there is one that backs a paper steed
> And manageth a pen-knife gallantly;
> Strikes his poinado at a button's breadth,
> Brings the great-battering-ram of terms to towns,
> And at first volley of his cannon shot
> Batters the walls of the old fusty world.'

The affectation, as well as the violence, of Marston's style is hit off in this satire quite as effectively as it is exposed in Jonson's more elaborate attack.

He is equally ambitious in comedy; for both *The Malcontent* and *The Fawn* aim at an unusual degree of originality in the conception of their main characters and situations; but in the former—in which Marston's work had the advantage of Webster's additions—he can only be said to have achieved a partial success, and in the latter he has from a literary point of view fallen short of it altogether. He is happier in a less ambitious kind of comedy, of which *The Dutch Courtezan* is in many respects a most praiseworthy example; while with regard to *Eastward Hoe* it is impossible to say in what degree the credit of this admirable play is attributable to him, and in what to Chapman. The literary satire of *What You Will* is necessarily in part obscure, but seems generally on the level of his *Satyres* proper, which cannot be regarded as a high one.

His lack of self-consciousness.

Either Marston was painfully aware of the limits of his powers, or the warning example in a contrary direction furnished by his adversary Jonson determined him to adopt a deprecatory attitude towards the public. But the iteration with which he assures the spectators of his 'constant modesty,' of his 'modest diffidence and selfe-mistrust,' and of his freedom from self-admiration, and confesses the 'slightness' of his productions, will affect some minds more disagreeably than the self-assertion of Ben Jonson. There is something of the molluscous Crispinus of the *Poetaster* in these appeals to a magnanimous public; and it is difficult not to interpret them as signs that Marston felt himself unable to command success without these conciliatory flourishes. His literary ambition was manifestly very great; and opposition vexed him to the quick. But though he had much ambition and many acquirements, together with the powers of occasional pathos and abundant humour, and at times a touch of poetic beauty of expression, yet there is a false ring about some of his efforts, and a want of sustained force in nearly all. He sought to excel in various dramatic species, but can hardly be said to have reached excellence in any but the comedy of manners; and the best of his productions of

His chief merits and defects.

this kind was not his unassisted work. Thus altogether his merits seem less conspicuous than those of most of the great dramatists with whom it has been his fortune to be habitually ranked; and it is doubtful whether he deserves to be remembered among those who have adorned our dramatic literature by creations of original genius.

A less qualified recognition seems to be the due of the next author whom I have to notice in this group of the later Elisabethan dramatists.

Thomas Middleton (1570 *circ.* 1627).

THOMAS MIDDLETON[1] was born about 1570, or rather later, the son of a gentleman settled in London. In the Introductory Epistle to his mask of *A World Tost at Tennis* he speaks of himself as 'born on the bank-side of Helicon, brought up amongst noble gentle commons and good scholars of all sorts, where, for his time, he did good and honest service beyond the small seas.' These expressions would seem to indicate that he was born in South London (he is also described as of Newington in the county of Surrey), that he enjoyed the education of a gentleman, and that he served for a short time in the wars in the Netherlands or in France. It may be unhesitatingly affirmed that he was at one time a member of Cambridge University, to the life at which he frequently refers in his plays with the easy but not unconscious familiarity of the old University man. Moreover, his works are, notwithstanding their frequent coarseness, distinguished by a general flavour of good-breeding from those of such an author as Dekker. His military experience, on the other hand, must have been of a very transitory kind, and has left no marked traces in his plays. He may probably be identified with a Thomas Middleton who became a member of Gray's Inn in 1593; and soon after that date his literary activity appears to have commenced.

His life.

Of the non-dramatic works which have been ascribed to Middleton none is demonstrably his; nor is there anything

[1] *The Works of Thomas Middleton. With some Account of the Author, and Notes.* By the Rev. A. Dyce. 5 vols. London, 1840.

very noteworthy about any of them[1]. As a dramatist he seems to have begun his career as early as 1599, the date at which his earliest comedy, written in conjunction with William Rowley, was probably produced. With this author he co-operated, as will be seen, in several other plays; he was similarly associated with Dekker, and on one occasion, according to Henslowe, with several other dramatists. Besides writing for the stage, he was employed as a writer of masks, of which however only two examples remain from his hand, and as a composer of pageants. In this latter capacity, after contributing to the great pageant mainly composed by Dekker for King James's entry into the City in 1603, he was afterwards repeatedly employed by the civic authorities, who in 1620 appointed him Chronologer to the City of London and Inventor of its 'honourable entertainments.' A relic of his labours as annalist has been unfortunately lost[2]; the last City entertainment composed by him bears date 1626. He died in 1627.

His City pageants.

Middleton as a dramatic politician (1624).

Three years before Middleton's death occurred the most remarkable incident in his career as a dramatist,—an incident which has at the same time considerable significance for the history of the English stage in general. In 1624 was produced at the Globe Theatre his comedy of *A Game at Chess*, which after being performed nine days in succession was prohibited by a royal mandate, both the author and the actors being summoned before the Privy Council. In this 'very scandalous comedy,' as Secretary Conway had informed the Privy Council in a letter dated August 12th, 1624, the players had taken 'the boldness and presumption, in a rude and dishonourable fashion, to represent on the

[1] These works, which comprise *The Wisdom of Solomon Paraphrased* (1597), (a poem in six-line stanzas), *Micro-Cynicon, Six Snarling Satires* (of the ordinary type), *The Blacke Booke* (a prose-tract suggested by Nash's *Pierce Pennilesse* and containing a humorous last will of Pierce's correspondent), and *Father Hubburd's Tales, or the Ant and the Nightingale* (a mixture of prose and verse, suggested of course by Spenser's powerful satire), will be found in Dyce's fifth volume.

[2] See Dyce, *Introduction*, p. xxiii, note. The offices of historiographer-royal and poet-laureate to the king were likewise formerly associated; and to this day I believe that the Professor of Modern History at Cambridge is expected on occasion to act as the *ex officio* poet of the University.

stage the persons of his Majesty' [King James I], 'the King of Spain, the Conde de Gondomar, the Bishop of Spalato,' &c. The Spanish ambassador had complained of this public insult; and appealing to the 'commandment and restraint given against the representing of any modern Christian King in those stage-plays,' the Secretary had, in the King's name, directed the necessary proceedings to be taken by the Privy Council. This was accordingly done. The principal actors appeared before the Council, and on examination 'confidently protested' that they had 'added or varied nothing at all' from the book of the play, which had been 'seen and allowed' by the Master of the Revels in the regular course. They were however summarily prohibited from performing either the obnoxious play, or 'any play or interlude whatsoever until his Majesty's pleasure be further known;' and had to bind themselves in '300^{li} bondes' to attend to this prohibition, and to appear before the Board when summoned. But a few days afterwards the general prohibition was taken off, his Majesty conceiving 'the punishment if not satisfactory for that their insolency, yet such as since it stopps the current of their poore livelyhood and mainteanance without much prejudice they cannot longer undergoe.' The obnoxious play itself, however, was 'not onely antiquated and silenced, but the Players' were 'bound as formerly they weare, and in that point onely never to act it again.'

Meanwhile the author, who had in the first instance contrived to 'shift out of the way,' tendered his appearance a few days afterwards, and, as is proved by an entry in the Council-register of August 30th, 1624, was allowed to go free, being however 'enjoyned to attend the board till he be discharged by order of their Lordships.' This disposes of the story that Middleton suffered imprisonment for his authorship of this comedy, and that he was released on sending a rhymed petition of a humorous character to the King. As has been suggested by Mr. Collier, 'the reason why no punishment was inflicted either upon the players or poet, was perhaps that they had acted the piece under the

authority of the Master of the Revels[1].' At the same time—especially as the Master of the Revels continued to perform the duties of his office as before—it may be surmised that the lenient treatment experienced by the offenders in this instance is to be accounted for by the unwillingness of the Court to affront public opinion by severely punishing them for a play so thoroughly in consonance with the prevailing current, to which the King himself had bowed. For the *Game of Chess*, as will be seen from the brief account given of it below, was a vigorous satire not only against the Spanish ambassador, but also against the Spanish marriage from which the nation was rejoicing that the Prince of Wales had escaped, and against Spain and Rome in general, which had never been more hated in England than at this moment. And, as has been well said by a historian of this episode in our history, when the Spanish match was at an end, James had ceased to reign[2]. War had been declared against Spain in March; and the man to whom the public rupture was attributed, the 'White Duke' of Middleton's play, — Buckingham, — seemed omnipotent. Thus Middleton escaped unharmed after venturing on the most audacious act on record in the annals of our early drama.

Middleton's reputation before and after death.

Of Middleton's relations to his more prominent literary contemporaries we know little or nothing; except that Jonson in the *Conversations* set him down as 'a base fellow,' while Thomas Heywood mentions him, without any

[1] Collier, i. 451. For the documents quoted see Dyce's Introduction to Middleton's *Works*, pp. xxviii–xxxvii. Mr. Collier observes, that we have no other information as to the 'commandment' against representing the person of a modern Christian King on the stage referred to in the Secretary's letter. Cf. *infra*, chap. viii. That the actors were fairly frightened appears from an allusion in the Prologue to Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and have a Wife* (acted in the same year 1624):

> 'Do not your looks let fall,
> Nor to remembrance our late errors call,
> Because this day we 're Spaniards all again
> The story of our play, and our scene Spain:
> The errors, too, do not for this cause hate;
> Now we present their wit, and not their state.'

[2] See Gardiner's *Prince Charles and the Spanish Marriage*, ii. 452.

special tribute of praise, among the dramatists of the age[1]. Three of his plays were brought on the stage after the Restoration; but he has since been less remembered than his deserts would have warranted. At the same time, as will appear from the following brief review of his works, he was perhaps happiest in a branch of dramatic literature which more than any other addresses itself in the first instance to the sympathies of a particular age. But he has merits which seem to call for a fuller record than has usually fallen to his lot in surveys of the Elisabethan drama.

His plays.

The dates of most of Middleton's plays are so absolutely uncertain, that they may without inconvenience be classed without any reference to chronological order. They seem (exclusively of the masks and pageants) to fall most naturally into two groups, in which however it is impossible to include the whole of this prolific author's works. Thus the play which I may notice first, as it is obviously of an early date in the author's career, connects itself in treatment with a less advanced period of our dramatic literature than that to which Middleton properly belongs.

The Mayor of Quinborough (pr. 1661).

The condition in which *The Mayor of Quinborough* (Queenborough) has come down to us makes it difficult not to subscribe to the hero's malediction of 'your new additions: they spoil all the plays that ever they come in; the old way had no such roguery in it[2].' For a play which combines an allusion to 'Oliver the Puritan[3]' with traces of a very antique kind of historic drama—dumb-shows and a presenter[4]—is obviously a work which has undergone modifications; but it is perhaps hardly worth while to enquire how far Middleton's work was supplemented by other hands in the edition (of 1661) which has

[1] Cf. vol. i. p. 257. Webster, in the enumeration of dramatists of note in the address prefixed to *Vittoria Corombona*, passes Middleton by altogether.

[2] v. 1.

[3] *Ib.*

[4] 'Raynulph Higden, Monk of Chester, as Chorus.' The author of the *Polychronicon* corresponds to Gower in *Pericles*, which this tragedy naturally recalls to Dyce.

come down to us. Though the play contains a reference to the comedy of *The Wild-Goose Chase* (which was produced about 1621), the date of its original composition must fall in an early period of Middleton's labours as a dramatist. It is in the manner of the Chronicle Histories, though written with far greater ease and freedom of diction than these; its subject is the mythical history of the conquest of Kent by Hengist and 'Horsus,' with Uther Pendragon, Vortiger and Vortimer, 'Roxena' and the rest of them; and the comic figure is the tanner Simon, the mayor of Queenborough, who is cozened by a company of pretended comedians while looking on at what he takes to be a play. The enumeration of plays suited for popular consumption, whether their names be real or imaginary, in this scene (v. 1) may be worth noticing; but as a whole the piece seems hardly to deserve perusal.

Romantic comedies:

A considerable number of plays, of which the authorship was entirely or in part Middleton's, belong to that mixed species to which in his age the names of tragedy or comedy were assigned in reference rather to the ending of the plot than to the general character of the piece. Essentially they belong to a species of the drama in which incident or intrigue constitutes the main subject of interest, and to which the name of romantic comedy may be as a rule not inappropriately applied.

The Old Law (acted 1599 prob.).

To this group belongs Middleton's earliest extant comedy, *The Old Law*, which the evidence of a passage in the play seems to assign to the year 1599, and which in subject as well as in occasional details savours of the student. The names of Massinger and William Rowley are associated with Middleton's on the title-page (of 1656); but whatever Rowley's share in it, Massinger may, as Gifford suggests, be presumed to have merely made some additions at a later date. The play is a romantic comedy on a sufficiently extravagant theme; but this being once allowed as admissible, the execution must be described as both facile and felicitous. 'Evander, duke of Epire' has promulgated a law ordaining that all old men living to the age of fourscore years, and all women to that of threescore, are to

be cut off as useless members of the commonwealth. With the exception of one dutiful son and his wife, who hide their aged father till he is discovered by the wiles of a female hypocrite to whom they have revealed their secret, this law is universally welcomed and put into execution with extreme eagerness. In the end it appears that the good Duke has merely intended to test the virtue of his subjects; the supposed victims of the law are made to sit in judgment on its supporters; and a new law is proclaimed which decrees that no son and heir shall be held 'capable of his inheritance at the age of one and twenty, unless he be at that time as mature in obedience, manners and goodness,' and that no wife who has designed her husband's death shall be allowed to marry for ten years after it has taken place. This conception, a very good one of its kind, is carried out with considerable spirit and humour; and much incidental fun is made of a speculative gentleman (Gnotho) who attempts to cut short his wife's period of existence by bribing a clerk to make a trifling change in the register of her birth, and then freely offers 'two to one' on his next matrimonial venture [1].

Altogether, this comedy makes a most pleasing impression, containing as it does occasional passages of no little tenderness of feeling; while it will hardly cause surprise that no advantage is taken of the subject to suggest the deeper kind of satire for which it might have furnished an occasion, but which would have hardly suited the author's conception of his theme [2].

[1] Indeed, he is ready to bet on any subject. Thus he stakes five drachmas on the correctness of a quotation ('we have Siren here' he quotes from the old play of 'Siren the fair Greek,' as he insists the name was; cf. vol. i. p. 211); and offers the Duke 'two to one with your grace of that' in the very face of the tribunal which is to 'censure' his iniquity.

[2] The passage (i. 1) in which the old wife determines to die with her husband recalls Burns' charming lyric:

> 'Tis fit that you and I, being man and wife,
> Should walk together arm in arm.'

For a 'deeper kind of satire' there was an opportunity in the love of life which might have been displayed by the old men—a theme treated with so terrible a force by Swift.

Blurt, Master-Constable (pr. 1602).

The lightness and gaiety of writing in *Blurt, Master-Constable*[1] (printed 1602) cannot render tolerable a play with so vile a plot. Beginning pleasantly and indeed prettily enough, with the sudden passion of a lady for the prisoner brought home from the wars by her lover, it ends offensively with the unfaithfulness of the prisoner, who has escaped and married the lady, and is finally brought back to her by a device which resembles a parody on the plot of *All's Well that Ends Well*. A good deal of humour is however scattered through the piece, and Blurt the Master-Constable, with his attendant Slubber, may be remembered as one of the many counterparts to Dogberry and Verges[2]. The reader may perhaps thank me for rescuing a pretty song from the midst of a mass of ribaldry which he will prefer to avoid[3]:

'Love is like a lamb, and love is like a lion;
Fly from love, he fights, fight, then does he fly on;
Love is all a fire, and yet is ever freezing;
Love is much in winning, yet is more in leesing[4];
Love is ever sick, and yet is never dying;
Love is ever true, and yet is ever lying;
Love does doat in liking, and is mad in loathing;
Love indeed is anything, yet indeed is nothing.'

The Phoenix (pr. 1607).

The comedy of *The Phoenix* (printed 1607) is said to be founded on a Spanish novel (*The Force of Love*); but from whatever source the plot be taken, it is a very ingenious one, and well, though rather lengthily, carried out. Prince Phoenix, being sent on his travels by his aged father to prepare himself for the duties of the throne, prefers to travel at home, and to study in disguise the evils which it will be his province as a sovereign to remove. (We have therefore here a new version of the old Haroun Alraschid device, used in a similar way by Shakspere in his *Measure for Measure*.) He succeeds both in discovering a

[1] The title of this play is shown by Dyce to be a proverbial phrase, equivalent to 'A fig for the constable!'—In Fletcher's *Love's Cure* (iii. 1) the villainous Alguazier is addressed as 'Don Blirt.'

[2] See esp. i. 2; and iv. 3: '*Blurt* . . . I am, in the duke's name, to charge you with despicious of felony; and burglary is committed this night; and we are to reprehend any that we think to be faulty.'

[3] ii. 2.

[4] *i. e.* losing.

mass of iniquity, and ultimately in bringing it to justice before the Duke. Among the evil-doers are, a personage in the habit of gratifying his passion for law-suits by inveigling simple countrymen into the hands of attorneys, who in return feed him with money for carrying on his own causes; a justice of the peace, who in addition to criminal designs of his own, keeps thieves as his servants and makes a mockery of his tribunal; besides wickedly dissolute courtiers, a jeweller's wife and the usual miserable Knight whom she supplies with her husband's money, and a treacherous politician who has engaged the disguised Prince to take part in a plot against the life of his father. The whole play is a social satire of some power—especially in the passages directed against the abuse of the law—and in two speeches of the Prince there is true elevation of moral sentiment[1].

The Witch.

The date of the 'Tragi-Coomodie, called *The Witch*,' unnoticed by the critics till the year 1778, when it was printed from a unique MS. (now in the Bodleian), is unknown,—a peculiarly unfortunate circumstance, inasmuch as the chief interest which this play possesses lies in its relation to Shakspere's *Macbeth*. The plot is a tissue, not worth the unravelling, of intrigues, the most important of these being taken, and very much marred in the taking, from the well-known story of the revenge of Rosamond upon Alboin, related in Macchiavelli's *History of Florence*, but probably known to Middleton through Belleforest[2]. The main question of interest with regard to this play is whether the machinery of the witches was borrowed by Middleton from Shakspere, or *vice versâ*. A fierce literary conflict has been waged on the subject, but cannot be said to have arrived at a very definite issue,—and this for two

[1] *viz.* that beginning

'Thou angel sent amongst us, sober Law,'

(i. 4), and that in praise of 'Reverend and honourable Matrimony' (ii. 2), which as Dyce points out bears a remarkable resemblance to the famous passage in bk. iv. of *Paradise Lost* (750 *seqq.*).

[2] William D'Avenant's *Albovine*, founded on the same subject, was first printed in 1629. (Cf. *infra*.)

reasons, *viz.* that the date of *The Witch* is altogether unknown, while the date of *Macbeth* is far from certain. If however, as there seems good reason to conclude, the date of *Macbeth* is not to be placed later than shortly after the accession of James I[1], this diminishes the probability of Shakspere having been the borrower, though there would be nothing in itself unlikely or of a nature to disquiet his admirers in the assumption. It has been well observed by a German scholar, when occupied in tracing the genesis of a modern work of genius, that resemblances which critics of one kind are only too ready to describe as 'reminiscences,' a more thoughtful criticism prefers to regard as illustrations of the historical developement of an artistic motive. Supposing Shakspere's play to have followed Middleton's, the group of the witches in *Macbeth* and the action assigned to them would not be appropriately described as a 'reminiscence' of the witches of Middleton, though this term might be truly applied to a few phrases and passages[2]. Charles Lamb has in so masterly a manner expressed the difference between the witches of Shakspere and those of Middleton, that nothing remains to be added to his words[3].

[1] See vol. i. p. 414.

[2] These will be easily identified by comparing with the well-known scenes in *Macbeth*, i. 2, iii. 3, and in particular v. 2 of *The Witch*. Passages from the last two of these scenes were inserted by D'Avenant in his altered *Macbeth* (1674), and were accordingly long attributed to him. In the *Macbeth* music attributed to Matthew Lock the words are all taken from *The Witch*. The supposition (favoured by Messrs. Clark and Wright) that Middleton interpolated a number of passages in Shakspere's play, is of course to be kept distinct from either of the suppositions adverted to in the text.

[3] 'Though some resemblance may be traced between the charms in Macbeth and the Incantations in this Play, which is supposed to have preceded it, this coincidence will not detract much from the originality of Shakspeare. His witches are distinguished from the witches of Middleton by essential differences. These are creatures to whom man or woman plotting some dire mischief might resort for occasional consultation. Those originate deeds of blood, and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet with Macbeth's, he is spell-bound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination. These witches can hurt the body: those have power over the soul.—Hecate in Middleton has a Son, a low buffoon: the hags of Shakspeare have neither child of their own, nor seem to be descended from any parent. They are foul Anomalies, of whom we know not whence they are sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending. As they are without

Supposing on the other hand Middleton to have followed Shakspere, the former too must be allowed the merit of originality of treatment, though it is less easy in that case to account for the virtual independence of the conception. Middleton's chief authority for the details of his witchcraft was Reginald Scot's *Discouerie of Witchcraft* (1584).

More Dissemblers besides Women (acted before 1623).

More Dissemblers besides Women (not printed till 1657, but certainly acted before 1623) is a comedy of intrigue, the plot of which is not infelicitously devised. The Lord Cardinal of Milan, a worthy prelate gifted with an eloquence of an extremely unctuous kind, is cheered in his old age by his belief in two seeming paragons of self-denial—the Duchess of Milan as holding in undivided affection the memory of her late husband, and the Cardinal's own nephew Lactantio as the very model of a young man, who

> 'would rather meet
> A witch far north, than a fine fool in love,
> The sight would less afflict'

him. It turns out, however, that neither the antecedents nor the intentions of the nephew correspond to the character he wears in his fond uncle's eyes, while the Duchess herself is carried away by a sudden passion from her thoughts of perpetual widowhood. To veil her real affection, she pretends love for Lactantio; but he in his turn is enamoured of another lady, beloved by the very Andrugio

human passions, so they seem to be without human relations. They come with thunder and lightning, and vanish to airy music. This is all we know of them.—Except Hecate, they have no names; which heightens their mysteriousness. Their names, and some of the properties, which Middleton has given to his hags, excite smiles. The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presence cannot co-exist with mirth. But in a lesser degree, the Witches of Middleton are fine creations. Their power too is, in some measure, over the mind. They raise jars, jealousies, strifes, *like a thick scurf o'er life.*' *Specimens*, p. 152. Cf. *The Witch*, i. 2:

> '*Hecate.* Well may we raise jars,
> Jealousies, strifes, and heart-burning disagreements,
> Like a thick scurf o'er life, as did our master
> Upon that patient miracle [*i.e.* Job]; but the work itself
> Our power cannot disjoint.'

who has unknown to himself engaged the heart of the Duchess. Thus a satisfactory embroglio results, which is further heightened by the existence of a poor little page, really a girl in disguise, whom the dissolute Lactantio has ruined. The pathos of this latter character is spoilt by some scenes of the grossest indelicacy. A comic character is supplied in Lactantio's servant Dondolo, a successful variation of the Launcelot Gobbo type; while a novelty is introduced in a scene in a gipsy camp, where Dondolo makes some futile attempts to master a language as puzzling to him as it has proved to many other students of philology.

Among Middleton's works this seems to furnish a good example of his versification, which is fluent and pleasing in the dialogue; the numerous lyrics are all trivial.

Middleton and William Rowley's The Spanish Gipsy (pr. 1653).

The Spanish Gipsie (printed 1653) has the name of William Rowley in addition to that of Middleton on its title-page, and one might be tempted to ascribe to Rowley's co-operation the marked element of serious purpose which distinguishes this from the generality of Middleton's independently-written plays[1]. Two stories taken from Cervantes are here—not very closely—interwoven, that of Roderigo and Clara being borrowed from the novel of *La Fuerza de la Sangre* (the Force of Blood), that of the gipsies from *La Gitanilla*[2]. The former is the story of a criminal wrong inflicted upon a pure maiden,—the perpetrator of which is brought to light by a strange combination of circumstances. This part of the play is written with a combination of power and delicacy to which Middleton is in general a

[1] Cf. below as to *A Faire Quarrell*.

[2] The *Gitanilla* of Cervantes suggested two Spanish plays, by Montalvan and by Solis; our *Spanish Gipsy;* Wolff's *Preciosa,* famous by virtue of Weber's music; a character in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame,* and touches in Longfellow's *Spanish Student.* See Ticknor's *Span. Lit.* ii. 430, note. There are however differences between the plot of Cervantes' novel and that of our play. Of *La Fuerza de la Sangre,* on the other hand, the story seems to have been more directly borrowed by Rowley and Middleton. Rapp, *Engl. Theater,* p. 44; who thinks that comedies by Lope de Vega may also have been in the English authors' minds. Langbaine (quoted by Dyce) thought the gipsy-plot to have been suggested by Fletcher's *The Beggar's Bush.*

stranger; but I would not on a mere conjecture deny to him the credit of scenes which display elements of tragic genius[1]. The other part of the plot is of a more complicated description; and turns on the supposition that a noble Spaniard Alvarez has, to escape from the hands of justice after slaying an adversary in a duel (twelve years before the date at which the piece plays), assumed with his family and friends the disguise of gipsies. As such they came into the neighbourhood of 'Madrill,' where the beauty of one of the gipsy girls, known under the name of Pretiosa, attracts the admiration of the gallants of the capital. This Pretiosa is in reality the daughter of the corregidor of Madrid (the father of the sinning Roderigo), having been taken away as a child by his sister, the wife of Alvarez. The gipsies finally appear to act a play in the house of the corregidor, when the requisite discoveries having taken place, everybody is restored to happiness—and Pretiosa (properly called Costanza) to the arms of her lover, who after joining the gipsies for her sake had been involved in one of the difficulties incident to their suspicious ways of life.

The ways of the 'noble gipsies[2]' are depicted with all Middleton's vivacity; and there is much opportunity for humorous scenes[3]. The play within the play is made use of somewhat as in *Hamlet;* but the corregidor's intention to convey a lesson to his guilty son is frustrated by that son himself, who being one of the actors and

[1] Especially i. 3 and the close of act iii.

[2] '*Alv.* Gipsies, but no tanned ones; no red-ochre rascals umbered with soot and bacon as the English gipsies are' [cf. as to this *More Dissemblers besides Women*, iv. 1], 'that sally out upon pullen, lie in ambuscado for a rope of onions, as if they were Welsh freebooters; no, our stile has higher steps to climb over, Spanish gipsies, noble gipsies.' (ii. 1.)

[3] These are especially furnished forth by the humours of Soto, the servant of a foolish gentleman (Sancho) who has joined the gipsies from admiration of the *beaux yeux* of the 'little monkey' Pretiosa. Soto salutes the mother of the gipsies as 'mother Bumby' (cf. vol. i. p. 167), and describes himself as servant to 'Don Tomazo Portocareco, nuncle to young Don Hortado de Mendonza, cousin-german to the Conde de Tindilla, and natural brother to Francisco de Bavadilla, one of the commendadors of Alcantara, a gentleman of long standing.' 'Afid of as long a style,' adds his interlocutor. (ii. 1.)

(for it is an *extempore* play on a given theme[1]) at liberty to say what he likes, says it.

As a whole, this finely-written production is an excellent example of the romantic comedy of the later Elisabethan type.

Middleton and William Rowley's A Fair Quarrel (pr. 1617).

In the comedy of *A Faire Quarrell* (printed 1617) the name of William Rowley is again associated with that of Middleton. It must remain uncertain whether to this circumstance is to be attributed the peculiar character of this play, for which it would be difficult to find any analogy in Middleton's other productions except *The Spanish Gipsy*, in which Rowley likewise co-operated[2]. Charles Lamb[3] has dwelt with great emphasis on the passionate power with which in his opinion the authors of this play have depicted the moral conflict constituting its chief interest. The hero, Captain Ager, has received from a friend, a soldier like himself, an insult reflecting on his mother's character. Before fighting the duel which is arranged in consequence, the Captain wishes to receive from his mother's lips a denial of the charge; but she, in her desire to prevent the conflict, falsely declares the accusation to be true. Her son hereupon refuses to draw his sword in a bad cause, and it is only when he has been called a coward, that having now a sufficient cause, he fights. He disarms his adversary, and in the end everything is wound up satisfactorily, by means no longer connected with the main subject of interest in the play. It is not to be denied that this plot furnishes an opportunity for an analysis of character, and for an illustration of a problem of social morality, of a far deeper nature than is usual with so light-hearted a philosopher as Middleton. There is much nobility in the development of Captain Ager's moral struggle with himself, recalling later attempts of a not dissimilar character, designed to illustrate the distinction—meaningless it would seem to many minds—between moral and merely physical courage[4]. But the flaw in the construction is the ignobility

[1] Cf. vol. i. p. 257. [2] Cf. *ante*, p. 78. [3] *Specimens*, p. 121.

[4] I refer in particular to the interesting novel of *Oakfield*. But of course the nature of the problem is here a different one. In *A Faire Quarrell* the question

of the hypothesis that a nobly trustful mind would allow itself to entertain doubts on such a charge as that which Captain Ager has in the first instance to meet. The doubts ought by a skilful management of the plot to have been suggested from without; and in such a way as to render excusable on the part of the son a passing hesitation as to the justice of his quarrel. Then would have followed as a crushing confirmation of these doubts the false confession of the mother, and the powerful situation in which the interest of the action centres would have been reached without our sympathy with the hero being impaired. I pass by the painfully offensive bye-plot of the play, as well as the humours, not ill-contrived, of master Chough, a 'Cornish diamond,' and a student in a school of 'roaring' in London—a conception quite worthy of Ben Jonson[1].

Middleton and William Rowley's The Changeling (acted by 1623).

Of *The Changeling* (acted as early as 1623) William Rowley was again joint author with Middleton. The unusual strength of the situations in this play, together with comic scenes of an almost equally pronounced kind, account for the great popularity which it enjoyed; it was revived after the Restoration, and the favour with which it was again received is attested by Pepys[2]. The humour of the scenes in the private madhouse will be less acceptable to a modern reader, who is unable to place himself on the standpoint of an age which regarded mental derangement as a subject for fun; but the subject is treated, after Middleton's manner, with more lightness of touch than is shown on a similar

is not whether a man should fight a duel, but whether he should fight it except in a cause of the justice of which he is convinced.

[1] The art of 'roaring' is the art of bullying; and the Cornish gentleman, who possesses no other native art than that of wrestling (ii. 2: 'O Corineus, my predecessor, that I had lived in those days to see thee wrestle! on that condition I had died seven years ago'), seeks to acquire this fashionable accomplishment from a professor who teaches it (in Holborn at the sign of the Cheat-Loaf) in several languages, 'the Sclavonian, Parthamenian, Barmeothian, Tyburnian, Wappinganian, or the modern Londonian.' (iv. 1.) There is some fun too in the character of the Surgeon, who, like his brethren in Molière, is unable to express a plain fact in plain terms; and describes his patient's wound as 'inclining to paralism,' and his body as 'cacochymic.' (iv. 2.)

[2] He went to see it on his 25th birthday, Feb. 23rd, 1661.

occasion[1] by Dekker, and the character of Lollio, the mad-doctor's man, is genuinely comic. In the main plot of the piece, on the other hand—taken from Reynolds's story of *God's Revenge against Murther* (printed 1621)—it is impossible not to recognise a most powerful subject for dramatic treatment, but an offensive developement is given to its latter part. 'Beatrice-Joana, in order to marry Alsemero, causeth De Flores to murther Alfonso Piracquo, who was a suitor to her. Alsemero marries her, and finding De Flores and her in adultery, kills them both.' The character of De Flores, an ill-favoured villain, hated by Beatrice till he consents to become a murderer on her behalf, is drawn with much force, and has a touch in it of Shakspere's Gloster. But though some of the scenes of this play are beyond a doubt terribly effective, the authors have not worked with sufficient care to reconcile the horrible story with psychological probability, and have needlessly made ghastly additions to a plot the blackness of which required no intensification.

Middleton's Women Beware Women (pr. 1657).

The tragedy of *Women Beware Women* (printed 1657) may perhaps be taken as an illustration of Middleton's degree of power as a tragic writer, when unassisted by Rowley, and confirm the probability suggested above as to the share attributable to the latter in the joint efforts of these dramatists. Two plots, of which one is stated to be borrowed from a romance called *Hyppolito and Isabella*, while the other has some slight connexion with history, are interwoven with a certain degree of ingenuity into a double tale of crime and its requital. The former story is that of the guilty love of an uncle for his niece, who has been made to disbelieve in their kinship, and who, in order to obtain a cloak for the passion she is now resolved to indulge, has married a foolish wealthy young ward. The other is in its beginnings identical with that of the life of the historical Bianca Capello, who ran away from her father's house at Venice with a young Florentine merchant's clerk—or, as he

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 44. The title of the piece has reference to the character of Antonio, who pretends to be a *changeling* or idiot for his own purpose, while another character (Franciscus) similarly counterfeits madness.

is called in the play, a 'factor.' At Florence, after being married to this man, she became the mistress of Prince Francesco de' Medici, and remained such after his marriage and his accession to the dukedom—for twenty years. Her miserable husband was provided with a place in the palace[1]. In the play, however, the Duke, after having fallen in love with Bianca on seeing her at a window as he passes in state[2], and made her his mistress with the aid of a certain Livia, who is, at least in the earlier scenes, one of the best-drawn characters in the play[3], in order to meet the moral exhortations of his brother the Cardinal makes her his wife. Her previous husband, whose lamentations are developed at great length, with occasional touches of pathos, is consoled by Livia herself. But the penalty of sin has to be paid; and in a final scene—by means of one of those masks with the aid of which the Elisabethan dramatists so frequently bring a complicated plot to a close—a wholesale massacre of the characters is accomplished, to which, in the plays of this period at least, it would not be easy to find a parallel. Some passages in this tragedy are not devoid of fire, and the scenes in which the Duke's meeting with Bianca is contrived and in which he entertains her at Court, the miserable husband standing by, are written with effective vivacity. But Middleton fails to show himself capable of true tragic dignity; and though his aim is undoubtedly moral, he is unable to furnish any relief of lofty sentiment to the grossness of the situations; while the humorous characters are revoltingly coarse. He lacked, in short, both delicacy of sentiment and sustained earnestness; and this tragedy, though not ineffective, must on the whole be considered an attempt in a direction which Middleton when left to himself was probably incapable of pursuing with real success.

Middleton's comedies of manners:

This author was, as it seems to me, most at home in plays dealing with subjects derived from his observation of

[1] Cf. Leo, *Gesch. d. ital. Staaten*, v. 562.

[2] This brief scene (i. 3) recalls a charming passage in Goethe's *Egmont* (act i).

[3] Charles Lamb (*Specimens*, p. 137) compares her to the Wife of Bath.

the manners of the world actually around him. To this group belong a large number of his comedies, including several of his most successful efforts.

Michaelmas Term (pr. 1607).

Michaelmas Term (printed 1607) is justly commended by Mr. Dyce. It is indeed one of the best-constructed and most freshly-written among the numerous Elisabethan comedies of its kind; for the *dramatis personae* are the usual figures of that comedy whose scene lies in the city of London, and whose satire is directed against the every-day follies and vices of the age. The unfortunate hero of the piece, Easy, is what Jonson would have called a 'country gull,' and what in the parlance of more modern times is called a 'pigeon;' and the sharpers who seek to effect his ruin are a usurer, Quomodo, and a pack of gentlemen-cozeners. Nothing could be more drastically true to life than the way in which Easy is wheedled into what seems to be his ruin; the scene of the gambling in the Ordinary (ii. 1) is excellent of its kind; and still better are the subsequent machinations of Quomodo and his accomplices to entangle their unfortunate victim by bond upon bond, till the usurer fancies he has the whole estate of Easy in his hands[1]. Overjoyed with his success, unable to dwell in imagination on anything but his 'lands in Essex' and his 'orchard in Essex,' the usurer bethinks him of a device to enable him to enjoy by anticipation the pleasures of the founder of a family of landed proprietors. He feigns death, in order to observe how his wife and his son, a hopeful youth who has finished his education at Cambridge[2] and been lately entered of an Inn of Court, will bear themselves on the occasion. To his utter discomfiture, it turns out that his wife is in love with his victim Easy, whom she marries on the spot; and that the

[1] The 'commodities' (cf. vol. i. p. 223, note 2) of course play a part in the usurer's 'expedients.' 'I know some gentlemen in town,' he assures the hesitating victim, 'ha' been glad, and are glad at this time, to take up commodities in hawks' hoods and brown paper;' as to which latter Dyce compares *Measure for Measure*, iv. 3, where it is coupled with 'old ginger.' This practice continued to prevail to such an extent that Bacon (in 1623) proposed to legislate against it. (See Spedding's *Life*, vii. 419.)

[2] '*Vim, Vitam, spemque salutem*' is this young gentleman's way of saying 'good morning.' 'He shows you there,' proudly says his father; 'he was a Cambridge man, sir.' (ii. 3.)

young Cantab is wholly free from respect for his father's memory. By a cleverly-contrived trick the disguised Quomodo is made to sign a release for Easy from his obligations; and thus the biter is bit, and the conclusion of the play (though rather hastily managed) proves as well-contrived as its general course. A bye-plot, on which it is impossible to dwell, exhibits the downfall of a country-wench, whose own father is the witness of her sins[1]. The play is written with so much vivacity and, considering the subject, with so little coarseness, that it will be read with great pleasure as a most spirited and healthy satirical sketch of the manners of the times. A very originally-conceived Induction is prefixed to the play: Michaelmas Term, as the father and feeder of the other Terms, appears to usher in 'those familiar accidents which happened in town in the circumference of those six weeks whereof' he is lord[2]. '*Sat sapienti*,' he concludes; 'I hope there 's no fools in the house.'

A Trick to Catch the Old One (pr. 1608).

A Trick to Catch the Old One (printed in 1608) is one of Middleton's most vivacious comedies; and from its plot Massinger borrowed a few hints for his famous play of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*[3]. Though moral justice can certainly not be said to be very symmetrically dealt out to the characters of this piece—for while the usurers are punished, the libertine and his companion are rewarded—

[1] There is something very touching and—so perennial are the lines in which folly and misery run—indescribably *modern* in the first appearance on the stage of the Father (i. 2).

[2] Middleton (see also his *Phoenix*) seems to have been particularly well acquainted with the ways of the profession to which he probably at one time in name belonged. The first scene of the play contains an amusing account of a lawyer who 'died of an old grief he had, that the vacation was fourteen weeks long.' 'He was one of those that would fain have brought in the heresy of a fifth term; often crying, with a loud voice, O why should we lose Bartholomew week?'—(The scene between the adventurer Lethe and his parent 'Mother Gruel' which follows, is obviously imitated from that of the meeting between Launcelot Gobbo and his father.)—Michaelmas Term (which then had 'eight returns;' see C. Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, act v) was equivalent to what in modern parlance would be called 'the Season;' and 'termers' was a name of approbrium applied to persons who came up to town to make their harvest in term-time. (See Middleton's Address to the Reader, prefixed to *The Family of Love*.)

[3] There is some resemblance as to plot in Lodowick Barry's *Ram Alley, or Merry Tricks* (printed 1611).

the plot is contrived with considerable ingenuity. Witwood, a profligate nephew ruined with the help of his uncle[1], the usurer Lucre, pretends to have secured the hand of a rich widow, whom he induces a frail friend of his to personate; and the old usurer immediately becomes all kindness, in the hope of ultimately making a prey of both. But the news having reached the ears of another usurer, of the name of Hoard, it occurs to the latter to secure the prize to himself. Witwood is only too happy to indulge him by connivance; and thus while Lucre has freed his lucky nephew from his obligations, Hoard frees him from the helpmate with whose aid he has effected his liberation from them. This—in half of its results—more than doubtful plot is carried out in Middleton's gay, though at times very coarse, manner; and the characters of the two usurers, their congenial friends and colleagues, and Dampit, a 'trampler' or lawyer of the most disreputable kind, are drawn with considerable spirit.

The Family of Love (pr. 1608).

The Familie of Love (printed 1608) is an ordinary comedy of intrigue; and though introducing as a comic element some coarse satire on an extravagant developement of religious enthusiasm, does this in such a way as to lead to the conclusion that the dramatist knew little or nothing of that which he was attempting to satirise. Some witty touches are not wanting; but it would be a mistake to seek here for evidence of anything more than the author's hatred of a supposed hypocritical cloak for sneaking immorality[2].

[1] Witwood says that it is a principle in usury that a man's nearest kin—'and that's his *uncle*'—should cheat him before a stranger. What is the origin of the coincidence that a well-known legalised kind of usury is said to be carried on by 'uncles'?

[2] The curious will find in Dyce's edition (ii. 103-6) a sufficient number of references to contemporary accounts of the sect which gives its name to the play. Its members presented a petition to King James at the time of his accession, it is not known with what results. Its founder is usually supposed to have been Henry Nicholas of Münster,—others say David George of Delft,—who came over to London in the latter part of the reign of Edward VI. It was of course an outgrowth of the Anabaptist movement, the suppression of which at Münster in 1535 led to so considerable an immigration of fanatics into England. Neal, the historian of Puritanism, says (i. 273 *cf.*) that the members of this sect 'had their private assemblies of devotion, for which they tasted of the severity of the government.'—Middleton of course satirises the

Your Five Gallants (lic. 1608).

Your Five Gallants (licensed 1608) is another comedy of a familiar type. Its hero, assuming the character of inexperience itself—in other words of the University man fresh to London[1]—unveils the wiles of five representative gallants ('rare fellows' who 'live on nothing; many cannot live on something'), whose several provinces need not be particularised.

A Mad World, my Masters (pr. 1608).

A Mad World, my Masters (printed 1608), while written with a full share of Middleton's usual vivacity and in part very ingenious in construction[2], deserves, even more strongly than a play by the same author already noticed[3], a reprobation not usually merited by the Elisabethan comedies, however coarse in their situations or in their language. The plot is that of the cozening by a young scamp of an old

Family of Love as belonging to the general host of Puritans, from which in their petition they appear (in order to avoid the ill-will of the King) to have sought to distinguish themselves. The rudiments of City Puritanism, as they appeared to its enemies, are described with some wit as follows (iii. 3): 'You shall hear how far I am entered in the right way already. First, I live in charity, and give small alms to such as be not of the right sect; I take under twenty i' th' hundred, nor no forfeiture of bonds unless the law tell my conscience I may do 't; I set no pot on a' Sundays, but feed on cold meat dressed a' Saturdays; I keep no holydays nor fasts, but eat most flesh o' Fridays of all days i' the week; I do use to say inspired graces, able to starve a wicked man with length; I have Aminadabs and Abrahams to my godsons, and I chide them when they ask me blessing; and I do hate the red letter more than I follow the written verity.'—Of the practices of the Family however it is obvious that the satirist knew nothing; unlike a popular author of our own age, whose researches into such subjects are infinitely more conscientious.

[1] 'Whence comes he, sir?' 'Piping hot from the university; he smells of buttered loaves yet; an excellent scholar, but the arrantest ass.' (ii. 1.)

[2] So for instance the grandson's robbery of his grandfather Sir Bounteous Progress, whose prodigal hospitality he abuses in disguise (act ii), and the clever device of the supposed play, by means of which the scamp and his friends contrive their escape (v. 1; a similar trick is played in *The Mayor of Quinborough*, cf. *ante*, p. 72).—The unerring instinct of the most shameless of the Restoration dramatists seized upon this comedy for partial adaptation in one of the worst of her outrages upon decency; in Mrs. Aphra Behn's *City Heiress* the plot, however, takes a different end; and Sir Bounteous Progress becomes Sir Timothy Treat-All, 'an old seditious Knight, that keeps open house for Commonwealthsmen and true blue Protestants,' while his nephew Wilding is introduced as 'a Tory' by the sympathetic authoress. Middleton's comedy was again adapted in part by a rather later dramatist, Charles Johnson.—It may be added that one of the minor characters of *A Mad World*, Mawworm, has nothing in common with his famous namesake in Bickerstaffe's *The Hypocrite*.

[3] Cf. *ante* as to *A Trick to Catch the Old One*.

fool his grandfather; but though a kind of retributive justice is wreaked upon both, it is hardly equivalent to a punishment in the case of the hero, who is at the same time the *rascal* of the piece. Could the charge be brought home to the pre-Restoration drama that, like the Restoration drama, it exhibits any general tendency towards sympathy with vice, it would be necessary to adopt a very different tone from that which seems just in criticising its productions. Now here, after a series of rascally tricks, the only punishment which befalls Dick Follywit is a marriage which he accepts in very good heart, and which is further recommended to him by gold, which he says at the conclusion 'makes amends for vice.' It is doubly unfortunate that Middleton should have so far forgotten himself in this play, as it contains a good deal of didactic morality in the mouth of a penitent debauchee, who—strangely enough in such a play—is actually tempted on the stage by a fiend in female shape.

Middleton and Dekker's The Roaring Girl (pr. 1611).

In *The Roaring Girle, or Moll Cut-Purse* (printed 1611), in which, as already stated [1], Dekker was associated with Middleton, there seems every reason to assign to the latter the principal share. In this sketch from real life [2], at first sight equally audacious in name and in design, the reader is refreshingly surprised by a character drawn with an odd combination of realistic vigour, genuine humour, and very kindly feeling. There are touches in it of that pathetic depth which Dekker could on occasion reveal; but the bright vivacity which gives something like a charm to this strange figure must be owing to Middleton's happier touch.

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 48.

[2] The heroine's real name was Mary Frith, and she is said to have been born in 1584 and to have died in 1659. What her actual character was may perhaps be doubtful; it suffices if Middleton and Dekker had fair grounds for the view they took of her. Her Life was published in 1662; and allusions to her abound in our literature, dramatic and other; 'mistress Mall's picture' (*Twelfth Night*, i. 3) is supposed to be one of these. See Dyce's Introduction to the play (Middleton's *Works*, ii. 427, where may be seen a facsimile of a woodcut (from the old edition of the play itself) of Moll indulging in a pipe of tobacco, the right of 'using' which she is said to have been the first to vindicate to her sex.—She is also introduced, though under no favourable aspect, in a scene of Field's *Amends for Ladies*.

The idea of illustrating by an example boldly taken from real life the fact that virtue may be found in the most unexpected quarters, is both a novel and a healthy one.

> 'He hates unworthily, that by rote contemns,
> For the name neither saves, nor yet condemns'

is a maxim which, if not driven beyond its meaning into a paradoxical antithesis between respectability and virtue, no one need scorn to remember; and the personage who exemplifies its truth in this comedy vindicates her right to a just judgment in so natural and pleasing a manner, that the reader of this extraordinary play will readily forgive its authors for introducing him to such 'very low company.'

Middleton (and Jonson and Fletcher?)'s The Widow (1615-6).

On the title-page of the comedy of *The Widow* (written late in 1615 or early in 1616, but not printed till 1652) Ben Jonson and Fletcher are mentioned as joint authors with Middleton; but the co-operation of the two more celebrated writers seems to have been doubted at an early date[1]. If Jonson had anything to do with it, his aid is probably to be traced in the fourth act, where the thief Latrocinio assumes the disguise of an 'empiric' or quack doctor, and picks the pockets of the credulous patients whom he is pretending to relieve of their ailments[2]. But though this device is quite in Jonson's manner, its execution is certainly inferior to that to which we are accustomed in his best comedies. The main plot of the play turns to a great extent on the idea—so familiar to modern comedy—of a widow-hunt[3]; but there is little which rises above the ordinary level of the popular Elisabethan stage.

[1] See Dyce's introductory note to the play, iii. 339; and his edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Works*, iv. 302.

[2]
> 'When the highways grow thin with travellers,
> And few portmanteaus stirring, as all trades
> Have their dead time we see, thievery poor takings,
> . . . . . .
> Then do I take my inn, and those curmudgeons
> Whose purses I can never get abroad,
> I take 'em more at ease here i' my chamber,
> And make 'em come to me; it's more state-like too.
> Hang him that has but one way to his trade!' (iv. 2.)

[3] 'To see,' says her principal suitor (i. 2), 'how fortune has provided for all mortality's ruins! your college for your old-standing scholar, your hospital for

Middleton's A Chaste Maid in Cheapside (pr. 1630).

A Chaste Maid in Cheapside (printed 1630) must be passed over as one of the most outrageous examples of the class of comedy to which it belongs. One of the characters observes (unfortunately the date of the play is uncertain, so that the historical application of the passage must remain undetermined):

> 'I have known
> This city now above this seven years,
> But, I protest, in better state of government
> I never knew it yet, nor ever heard of;
> There have been more religious wholesome laws
> In the half-circle of a year erected
> For common good than memory e'er knew of,
> Setting apart corruption of promoters,
> And other poisonous officers, that infect
> And with a venomous breath taint every goodness[1].'

Two of these promoters appear on the stage to practise their trade of spying out offences against the law, and—which is beyond a promoter's line of business—to execute it by a summary process of confiscation. But the offences committed in this play are by no means generally of so venial a character as that of selling meat in Lent. I should have left it unmentioned altogether, were it not that among its comic figures is one of which I know no other example in the Elisabethan drama drawn with the same degree of elaboration. In the first scene of the play, the goldsmith Yellowhammer and his wife receive by 'one of Hobson's porters[2]' a letter from their hopeful son Tim at Cambridge, which (by a free translation of its Latin exordium) they interpret as a request for a pair of boots and 'pay the porter;' and in a later part of the play Tim himself appears, telling his mother, who is anxious to introduce him to female society[3], that she 'entreats like a fresh-woman,'

your lame-creeping soldier, . . . your open house for your beggar, and your widow for your gentleman.' For some of her suitors the widow Valeria however proves more than a 'match.'

[1] ii. 1.

[2] Hobson is of course the famous Cambridge carrier, immortalised by Milton.

[3] 'He is so bashful,' says Mistress Yellowhammer—(without looking into the future)—

and in general favouring the audience with a notion of an 'under-bachelor's' manners and accomplishments sufficiently instructive and entertaining. He chops logic with his tutor, and looks out unfamiliar words in 'Rider's dictionary;' but he shows small knowledge of the world, and is finally doomed to a most unfortunate marriage, his consolation being the reflexion 'O tempora, O mores!' As already observed, there can be little doubt that Middleton had some personal experience of Cambridge life, and an odd perspective is opened by such reminiscences as this into what a University education must have been in those days to the ordinary lads who went up to its lean pastures, and returned, like Tim, with all 'the Dunces' in their 'own pate,' and prepared to 'read 'em to others[1].'

Anything for a Quiet Life (pr. 1662).

In *Anything for a Quiet Life* (printed 1662) there is little to be commended besides the title. It is one of Middleton's hastiest performances. This is evident from the very form—as to which it is at times difficult to say whether it be verse or prose—though the piece is not devoid of well-written passages. The young stepmother, who cures her husband's follies by apparently obliging him to commit greater to satisfy her whims, fails to arouse our interest, while much in the remainder of the plot is intolerably

'that 's the spoil of youth:
In the university they 're still kept to men
And ne'er train'd up to women's company.' (iii. 2.)

[1] The 'Dunces' are of course the schoolmen.—Tim's sense of masculine dignity is delightful. When his mother offers him simple refreshment, he exclaims indignantly:

'Come I from Cambridge,
And offer me six plums?'

and when, on the other hand, she threatens to make his tutor whip Tim, he loses patience completely:

'O monstrous absurdity!
Ne'er was the like in Cambridge since my time;
'Life, whip a bachelor! you 'd be laugh'd at soundly;
Let not my tutor hear you, 't would be a jest,
Through the whole university.' (iii. 2.)

From which it may be inferred, that young gentlemen who had not yet taken their B.A. were liable to this species of correction; which completely agrees with the statute of Christ's College noticed by Mr. Masson in his *Life of Milton* (i. 113): 'Si tamen adultus fuerit, alioquin virgâ corrigatur.'

offensive. This play incidentally proves that Middleton could write very good French.

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's (acted by 1638).

Finally, *No Wit, No Help like a Woman's* (acted in 1638, printed in 1657) is a vivaciously-written comedy of intrigue, made up of two plots, either of which would have sufficed for a play in the earlier days of the English stage. The plot with which the action opens in its symmetrical setting and its easy developement recalls the old comedies based on classical models, and the very notion of the origin of the difficulty—the loss of a wife and daughter seized by pirates, the return of the wrong girl, and the delayed return of the wife supposed dead—smacks of Plautus and Terence, while Savourwit the servant is a Davus of the old school. On the other hand, the second plot, in which the brave Mistress Low-Water disguised as a gallant outwits the rich widow Goldenfleece and her four suitors, and after pretending to marry the widow herself, secures her for her brother, is of a kind more familiar to later Elisabethan comedy, and is executed with remarkable spirit. The most amusing of the four suitors (who perform a kind of mask of the Four Elements for the diversion of the Widow) is Weatherwise, whose belief in almanacks is made the subject of much detailed fun of the Jonsonian kind[1]. The play, though in passages exceedingly well written[2], is however rather lengthy; and the author had not sufficient good taste to avoid, or at least to pass quietly over, an exceedingly painful situation wholly unfit for comedy, arising out of the former of his plots[3].

A Game at Chess (acted by June, 1624).

I have reserved to the last a notice of one of Middleton's plays which is entirely *sui generis*. To the circumstances connected with the production and prohibition of *A Game at Chess* (acted by June 1624) reference has already been

[1] The date of the performance (doubtless not the first, as Middleton had died in 1627) appears from a passage in iii. 1: 'If I, that have proceeded in five-and-twenty such books of astronomy, should not be able to put down a scholar now in one thousand six hundred and thirty-eight, the dominical letter being G, I stand for a goose.'

[2] Chas. Lamb has quoted several in *Specimens*, pp. 141–3.

[3] iv. 1.

made. To furnish a complete key to the meaning of this allegorical comedy is beyond my power; enough is however perceptible of its meaning to admit of the following brief note on one of the most curious dramatic productions of the period under review.

There is no difficulty in accounting for the audacity with which in *A Game at Chess* Middleton ventured to bring on the popular stage allegorical representatives of the highest personages in the realm, of a foreign sovereign whose alliance had long been an object near to the heart of the King, and of a statesman who had exercised an influence, unparalleled in its way, upon him. The personages whom the dramatist ventured publicly to subject to the most truculent invective and the most uncompromising satire were the objects of a popular hatred fed by the strongest motives of patriotism and prejudice; and might now at last be openly treated as national enemies. Thus the current of public feeling of which this play was intended to take advantage was thought capable of carrying along with it even so unprecedented a venture of dramatic licence.

Historical antecedents of the situation which produced this play.

The course and final collapse of the famous project of the Spanish Marriage form one of the most curious episodes in the history of modern diplomacy. An eminent statesman and historian[1] peculiarly qualified to form an opinion on such transactions has called this 'high comedy' of the most genuine sort. Yet it would not have deserved the attention it has received both at his hands and at those of the English historian of James' reign[2], were it not, taken altogether, the most astonishing exemplification of the futile statesmanship of the King, and were not its close a turning-point in the history of English foreign policy.

The relations between the Spanish and English governments had since the conclusion of peace soon after the accession of James I been uniformly friendly. While in the more ardent spirits of the nation the idea survived that England's place was at the head of a league of Protestant

[1] Guizot, in his *Un Projet de Mariage Royal* (Paris, 1863).

[2] Mr. S. R. Gardiner, in the work already quoted. Ranke, in his *Englische Geschichte*, vol. ii, has devoted a chapter to these transactions.

Europe against Spain, the calm policy of Salisbury (Robert Cecil) prevented the re-opening of the conflict which Ralegh and kindred spirits never ceased to desire. On the other hand, Salisbury never had any intention of bringing about a close alliance between Spain and England, such as the Spanish government had at heart; and the early suggestions of a marriage between the (then) Prince of Wales and a Spanish infanta, made on the Spanish side, met with no response at the English Court. When, towards the end of Salisbury's career, James deemed it convenient to reopen the negotiations on the subject, he found that the hand of the infanta Anna was no longer free; and the death of Henry Prince of Wales closed the first act of this series of transactions. The marriage of the Princess Elisabeth to the heir of the Palatinate was hailed with enthusiasm by the Protestant feeling of the nation; and though under the ascendancy of Somerset pacific relations continued with Spain (the favourite was himself accused of betraying state-secrets to the Spanish government), public feeling was becoming more and more eager for a rupture. Such an event seemed near at hand in 1613; but the King was eager to maintain peace, and to foster these sentiments in him the Spanish Government despatched as ambassador to England in this year Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña (afterwards—from 1617—Count Gondomar). Soon afterwards, at a time when the King was on the worst of terms with his Parliament, negotiations were opened for the marriage of Charles Prince of Wales with the Infanta Maria, the younger daughter of Philip III. The difficulties were great; but of the real objection, the continued hatred of the nation against Spain, no account was taken. While a Commission of the Council was considering the articles of the Marriage Treaty, events were preparing which might have buried its memory in the flames of a national struggle. But James resolutely shut his eyes to the national sentiment, and Ralegh's head fell on the block as a sacrifice to the wounded susceptibilities of Spanish pride.

In 1619 the Bohemian crisis (which opened the Thirty Years' War), and the assumption by the son-in-law of

James of the Bohemian crown, seemed to render it incumbent upon England to choose her side in the struggle which had now really opened against the great dynastic combination of the two branches of the House of Habsburg. The desire of the nation was that England should identify herself with the cause of the Elector Palatine. King James in so far coincided with the national wish that when his son-in-law was in danger of losing his hereditary dominions, the Palatinate, the King became genuinely anxious to avert the event. The design of the Spanish Government was to dupe King James into a policy of peace and a belief in his influence as a mediator. In 1620 Gondomar returned to England as ambassador; and while Spain was preparing to co-operate in the raid upon the Palatinate, the negotiations for the marriage treaty were resumed. They were carried on even after the Palatinate had been entered by Spanish troops; for King James was in hopes that by means of this marriage he might recover for his son-in-law what he had now promised the nation, if necessary, to recover by force of arms. Philip IV was now King of Spain, and Olivares the director of his policy. For a time Philip proposed to withdraw from the match, and Olivares was anxious to substitute a scheme of his own. But a masterstroke had been prepared by Gondomar, before quitting his ambassadorial post in 1622. The Prince of Wales had promised him to visit Madrid in person, and on this visit Gondomar intended that measures should be taken to induce him to become a Catholic.

The visit took place in 1623; and on it Charles was accompanied by Buckingham. On August 28th the Prince swore to the marriage contract, without any satisfactory arrangement having been made as to the recovery of the Palatinate; and on October 5th he and his companion landed on the English shores. The Prince had arrived without his bride; and the joy of the people knew no bounds. But in truth the matter was not yet at an end, though the end was near. Nor was it till at last James found himself the only remaining believer in the possibility of carrying out his scheme, that he gave way—recalled

his minister from Madrid—and summoned a Parliament. Buckingham was riding on the top of the wave of popular anti-Spanish feeling; and by the middle of March (1624) war was declared against Spain.

It was in the full tide of this feeling, and in the midst of the excitement consequent upon the ultimate victory—as it seemed—of the national policy that Middleton's comedy was produced. It must have been brought out in the early summer of 1624[1]; nor could it have been ventured upon at any much earlier time. As an expression of popular feeling it is thoroughly faithful; as an allegorical picture of historical events and characters it is a mixture of truth, exaggeration, and delusion. It is true that King Philip IV of Spain had resumed schemes of a dynastic ambition cognate to that of Philip II himself. It was an exaggeration to represent English Protestantism as in serious danger from the schemes of Gondomar. It was a delusion to trust in Buckingham as the minister who would realise the ends desired by the nation.

But popular excitement needs heroes for its enthusiasm and objects for its wrath. That Gondomar, though he had left England in May 1622, should have been selected in the latter capacity, was both natural and in a sense justifiable. His power over the King had been as great as the popular instinct supposed. But he was above all hated from religious motives; and he had in truth done what in him lay to inflame the most powerful of all popular feelings against him. He was a thorough bigot, and had all the strength and all the weakness which bigotry gives. He thoroughly believed in the irresistible authority of the

[1] This is evident from the date of Secretary Conway's letter to the Privy Council, August 12th, 1624 (as to the misleading date August 1623, affixed to a letter by Howel from Madrid which refers to 'plays made against Gondomar for doing his master's business,' see Collier, i. 453), and from the fact (not I believe previously noticed) that in this letter the King is stated to have received information *from the Spanish ambassador* of a very scandalous comedy, &c. Now, both the Spanish ambassadors, the Marquess de la Inojosa and Don Carlos de Coloma, quitted England at the end of June. (See Nichols, *Progresses of James I*, iv. 980, note 4.) It is very strange that the Secretary should have let more than a month elapse till he interfered—but such seems to have been the case.

power which he represented, and he had no comprehension whatever of the force of the Protestant sentiment in England which he induced the King to affront. The Queen, who was inclined to Catholicism, he counted upon as a sure ally in his ulterior schemes. He actually induced James to enter upon a course of policy in religious matters which set the nation aflame. In 1621, when he thought he had reached the height of his success, James having dissolved his Parliament, Gondomar wrote that it was 'the best thing that has happened in the interests of Spain and the Catholic religion since Luther began to preach heresy a hundred years ago[1].' In 1622 he had brought on the King a storm of unpopularity; and in a libel widely circulated Gondomar was declared to be in possession of the cabinet secrets of the Defender of the Faith—of the Papists[2]. His crowning scheme, of bringing about the conversion of the Prince of Wales to the Catholic faith by exposing him to the influence of the Spanish theologians at Madrid, best shows the depth of his convictions and the limits of his astuteness. By the time Charles had returned from Spain public feeling had been excited against the Catholics to such a pitch, that when a number of Catholic worshippers had been killed by the accident of a floor giving way, burial in consecrated ground was refused to them by the Bishop of London[3].

The above will suffice to explain the nature of the situation which Middleton's play of *A Game at Chess* was audaciously intended to 'improve,' and the popular welcome which the play received[4]. After repeated attempts to understand its significance, I can offer no better account

[1] Gardiner, ii. 153. [2] *Ib.* 183.

[3] *Ib.* 435. This was at the end of October, 1623.

[4] This welcome was such as to be long remembered. In Wm. D'Avenant's *The Play-house to be Let* (acted about 1663) the Tire-woman says, 'There's such a crowd at the door, as if we had a new play of Gundamar.'—It may be added that about the same time as *The Game at Chess* a play called *The Spanish Viceroy* seems to have been performed without the licence of the Master of the Revels, to whom the actors had to make a humble apology on Dec. 20 (see Cunningham's Introduction to Massinger's *Plays*, p. xi). As to Massinger's supposed authorship of this (non-extant) play, which is likewise conjectured to have been full of allusions to Gondomar, cf. *infra* under Massinger.

of it than the following, which I must leave the ingenuity of some future writer to supplement.

A Game at Chess.

The main design of the allegory is clear. The Black and the White House—*i.e.* Spain and England—are matched against one another in a game at chess. In the Induction Ignatius Loyola wakens up Error, whom he salutes as 'father of Supererogation.' Error bids Loyola behold a game which he is to regard as a 'dream' or 'vision,' and at once introduces to his notice the White and Black Houses, with Kings, Queens, Knights, Bishops, Dukes (or Rooks), and Pawns, who appear on the stage 'in order of the game.' In the play itself the action proceeds either in a field between the White and the Black House, or in the latter itself; but the allegory of the game is confined to incidental touches in the course of the action, to the names of the characters, and to the catastrophe. The discomfiture of the Black House is brought about by the White Knight's taking the Black Knight by 'discovery' and thus checkmating the Black King. The Black King, the Black Queen, and the Black Knight are then put in the Bag, where some of the lost pieces—the Fat Bishop and the Black lost Pawns—already lie. This scene must have created immense merriment, and have brought a rather laboured effort to a triumphant conclusion.

The leading characters were doubtless in the main personal. The White and Black Kings and Queens are of course the English and Spanish sovereigns; and the designs which were founded upon the Queen's inclination towards Catholicism are adverted to in no covert terms[1]. The White Knight is Charles Prince of Wales; and I think it not impossible that the White King's Pawn, who is finally discovered to be 'black underneath,' may be intended for Somerset[2].

[1] See iv. 4: 'You aim'd at no less person than the Queen
The glory of the game; if she were won,
The way were open to the master-check,' &c.

[2] '*White King.* Hath my goodness,
Clemency, love, and favour gracious, rais'd thee
From a condition next to popular labour,
Took thee from all the dubitable hazards

The remaining characters—with two exceptions—need not be dwelt upon. The Black Bishop, however, is the General of the Jesuits; the Black Bishop's Pawn is a Jesuit agent who has not yet taken the vows; and the Black Queen's Pawn a 'secular Jesuitess,' *i.e.* a female agent of the Order, such a personage as that Donna Luisa de Carvajal over whom, in an early part of the reign, Gondomar extended his aegis, in defiance of both public opinion and the royal authority[1]. It is not clear, however, whether the dramatist had any intentions of personal satire in the case of these minor characters.

No doubt whatever exists as to the identity of the two principal personages—so far as effectiveness is concerned—in the piece. The Black Knight is Gondomar, whom it must have been the author's intention to draw to the life. In order that no mistake may remain, the malady from which Gondomar was known to suffer, and the litter in which it was in consequence his custom to be carried about, are both introduced. For the rest, in details as well as in general features, this sketch corresponds closely enough in its details to what actually remains recorded of its original. The end at which he aims is

> 'the great work, the main existence,
> The hope monarchal[2]'—

and he has no rest

> 'till that great work,
> Call'd the possession of the earth, be ours[3].'

> Of fortune, her most unsecure adventures,
> And grafted thee into a branch of honour,
> And dost thou fall from the top-bough by the rottenness
> Of thy alone corruption, like a fruit
> That's over-ripen'd by the beams of favour?
> Let thine own weight reward thee; I've forgot thee:
> Integrity of life is so dear to me,
> Where I find falsehood or *a crying sin*,
> Be it in any whom our grace shines most on,
> I'd tear 'em from my heart.'

Some of these expressions appear to suit the circumstances of Somerset's rise and fall remarkably well; but it may be objected that the latter event had taken place several years before the composition of this play, and that in 1622 he and his Countess had been allowed to leave their confinement.

[1] Gardiner, *u. s.*, vol. i. p. 11.

[2] i. 1. [3] iii. 1.

He describes with the utmost zest some of his past 'brave designs' towards the accomplishment of this great end—how he procured a fleet

> 'from the White Kingdom to secure our coasts
> Against the infidel pirate, under pretext
> Of more necessitous expedition[1]'—

and how he

> 'made the jails fly open, without miracle,
> And let the locusts out, those dangerous flies,
> Whose property is to burn corn without touching[2].'

The means by which he procures his objects he reveals with no less candour. His main engines are bribes—he has

> 'sold the groom o' the stole six times,
> And receiv'd money of six several ladies
> Ambitious to take place of baronets' wives[3]'—

and plots—when his Pawn tells him one of his plots is discovered he enquires

> 'Which of the twenty thousand and nine hundred
> Four score and five—canst tell?'—

and altogether the caricature is executed with a vigour and fulness which can have left nothing for the bitterest hater of Spain among the spectators to desire[4]. To the Black Knight, the evil genius of the play, the Fat Bishop appears as a comic foil; and this character too is unmistakeable. He represents one of the strangest figures of a strange time—one of the few converts whom Protestantism has ever made in the person of a prelate of the Church of Rome. Antonio di Dominis, successively Archbishop of

[1] iii. 1. The allusion is to the Algiers expedition in 1620, the sailing of which was however in reality much against the wishes of Gondomar and his sovereign. Cf. Gardiner, i. 348.

[2] *i.e.* large numbers of Catholics who were in prison for their religion were set free by Gondomar's intercession in 1622. See Gardiner, ii. 235.

[3] iv. 2.

[4] The use of the nickname of 'Diegoes' or 'Don Diegoes' as applied to Spaniards in general is anterior in date to Gondomar's arrival in England. It seems to have been similarly applied in France. (See Nares' *Glossary*, *sub voce*.) An occurrence to which it is unnecessary to refer gave a specially offensive sound to the name in England.

Spalato (in Dalmatia) and Dean of Windsor[1], is here ridiculed with savage humour, as a

'greasy turncoat gormandising prelate,'

the 'balloon-ball of the churches,' whom, as an utter nuisance to the Black House, the Black Knight causes to be got out of the way by a delusive promise of preferment on the side which he has deserted for the good things of the White House. His demeanour in the Bag at the close of the play is sufficiently comic.

Finally, of the plot of this extraordinary production, it must suffice to say that it divides itself into two parts, one of which is, to me at least, only partially intelligible, while the other, on which the main interest of the piece centres, is clear enough. The former consists of the evil design which it is intended to work upon the lady who is called the White Queen's Pawn, in whom an allegorical representative of the Church of England has been sought[2], while I should rather be inclined to suspect some special reference to a supposed Jesuit intrigue which I am unable to identify. The latter is the visit of the White Knight —*i.e.* Prince Charles—and 'his most firm assistant' the

[1] I take the substance of the following biographical note from Nichols' *Progresses of James I*, iv. 231; a fuller account will be found in Bishop Goodman's *Court of James I*, but this is not a book one is inclined implicitly to trust. The Archbishop appears to have arrived in England in 1616, and being by the King's special command entertained by the Archbishop of Canterbury, to have at once begun the composition of his book—which was afterwards published in eight languages—giving his reasons for abandoning his see. He remained at Lambeth for some time, and attended the services of the Church of England. As an acknowledgment of the lustre conferred upon the latter by this distinguished convert—who had been educated amongst the Jesuits and been Bishop of Segni before his promotion to an archbishopric—King James bestowed on him the Deanery of Windsor, the Mastership of the Savoy, and a living in Berkshire. In 1622, on the accession to the Papacy of Gregory XIV —an old friend of his—he returned to Rome with the hope of becoming a cardinal and contributing to the reformation of the Church which he thus rejoined. But his renunciation was not accepted as complete; he was thrown into prison and died there in 1625. His remains were burnt by order of the Inquisition.

[2] It would be a curious coincidence, were this conjecture to be accepted, that the Black Bishop's Pawn describes her virtue in words irresistibly recalling Dryden's 'fairest creature of the spotted kind'—

'Your merit which through erring ignorance
Appears but spotted righteousness to me.' (i. 1.)

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White Duke—*i.e.* Buckingham—to the Black House—*i.e.* to Madrid. Here they are sorrily entertained by the Black Court, whose feasts are those of ambition only[1], and seem entirely to fall in with the ends and ways of the latter, till the White Knight suddenly turns round upon his insidious hosts and gives the Black King check by 'discovery.' The White Knight is immediately restored to his father's arms, and after the enemies have been consigned to their doom, the play ends with a joyous welcome on the part of the White King to the hero of the play and of the days in which it was produced:

> 'We, winner-like,
> Destroying through heaven's power, what would destroy,
> Welcome our White Knight with loud peals of joy.'

The literary merits of this dramatic allegory are by no means of a high order, and its political views are, so far as it is possible to judge, of that reckless sort which usually result from an endeavour to suit the current humour of popular sentiment. But while the historical student will not fail to observe with what strength public opinion must have run in the direction of the sentiments of this piece, for its author to have ventured upon producing it,—and for it to have passed the censorship of the Master of the Revels,—neither will literary criticism pass by unheeded so singular a composition. This play, which Ben Jonson is hardly unjust in alluding to as 'poor[2],' is in fact the solitary work with which the Elisabethan drama fairly attempted to match the political comedies of Aristophanes. No literary species can spring out of the earth in a single day.

Middleton's pageants and masks.

Besides the above contributions to the popular stage, Middleton is also known to have produced, in addition to a considerable number of City pageants on the usual

[1] 'In the large feast of our vast ambition
We count but the White Kingdom, whence you come from,
The garden for our cook to pick his salads,
The food's lean France, larded with Germany, &c. (v. 3.)

[2] *Staple of News*, iii. 1.

themes[1], two of those 'toys' (as he calls one of them) in which the courtly society of his age took so great a delight. So far as it is possible to criticise such ephemeral productions as *The Inner-Temple Mask* (produced in 1619) and *The World Tost at Tennis* (attributed to the year 1620), they may be said to exhibit an unusual degree of freshness of invention and vivacity of writing. The best thing in the former is 'the last will and testament of Kersmas' [Christmas], who bequeaths his joys and jollities to his children and kinsmen, humorously named after the most popular games at cards. There is much derision of those restrictions upon unlimited festivity which were doubtless in those days regarded with special disfavour in the Inner Temple Hall. *The World Tost at Tennis* is more ambitious in design; the induction (carried on between the three favourite royal palaces) is pleasing; but the plot of the mask itself, in which the 'world' is passed about like a tennis-ball from one to the other profession, till at last it settles firmly and fairly in the hands of sovereignty, need not be detailed[2]. Its characters are very multifarious, including, besides various allegorical and mythological personages, such old friends as the Devil and the Nine Worthies.

Middleton merits as a dramatist.

Middleton's rank among our dramatists has been the subject of dispute among the few who have bestowed attention upon this fertile author; but it is quite unnecessary in surveying any period or department of literature to construct tables of precedence. The modesty with which Middleton himself appears to have abstained from any endeavour to assert his claims to fame or eminence of any kind may plead in his favour, and permit us to remain content with the observation, that among the many qualities which constitute a dramatist of the order next

[1] *The Triumphs of Truth, The Triumphs of Love and Antiquity, The Triumphs of Integrity, the Triumphs of Honour and Industry, &c.*

[2] In W. Alexander (afterwards Earl of Stirling)'s *Alexandraean Tragedy* (1605), v. 1, Aristotle compares the world to

'a tenis-court
Where fortune doth play states, tosse men for balls.'

to the highest not a few were possessed by him. In the works attributed to him which exhibit the nearest approach to tragic power he had the advantage of William Rowley's co-operation; and it is therefore, to say the least, impossible to allow to Middleton the whole credit of these productions. But he certainly understood the secret of dramatic action, whether serious or comic in the nature of its interest. Upon the whole his plays are strikingly rapid in their movement. It is his usual practice to combine two plots into a single play; and this he ordinarily effects with much success as a constructor, though he worked too rapidly to attend to minor unevennesses, and though here and there he forgot in his haste fully to carry out the moral lesson which he intended to convey.

What however is to me most striking in Middleton is the absence of effort, which, if combined with a generally true instinct of effect, is a sure sign of genuine artistic power. Something of this may be due to the circumstances of his breeding and training. Apart from the gross indecency which was a characteristic of his times rather than of his class, he writes with the light touch of a well-bred gentleman, and very differently from the ponderous Dekker for instance on the one hand, or the pedantic Marston on the other. He is not in the least desirous of exhibiting his accomplishments as a reader, though he must have been acquainted with various kinds of literature—it is pleasing to note by the way that he was evidently fond of Chaucer. But while he writes with ease, while as a rule he is fluent in his versification and perfectly natural in his prose, he is by no means devoid of force, though it is not his manner to seek effect from mere strength of phrase. From bombast he is upon the whole singularly free.

His comedies of English life unsurpassed of their kind.

More than ordinarily successful in romantic comedy, at times very felicitous even here in his choice of subjects, he seems to exhibit his full powers when in contact with his native soil. Upon the whole, Middleton's comedies dealing with the English life of his own age are perhaps the truest dramatic representation of it. He is less intent upon reproducing strong and enduring types of the Jonsonian

kind than upon drawing faithful pictures of men and manners which shall bring home in a facile manner the straightforward lessons of morality and virtue which it is in the power of his comic muse to teach. In general therefore it will be less easy to recall particular characters from his dramas, than to remember the admirable effect produced upon the reader by the *ensemble* of such comedies as *Michaelmas Term*, *A Trick to catch the Old One*, or *A Mad World, my Masters*. If it be allowable to regard these plays as fair examples of the comedy of manners which the age enjoyed, and by enjoying acknowledged as true, the value of Middleton's works in our dramatic literature will be apparent. For his whole genius was free from any tendency to exaggeration, while of his moral aim there is no reason whatever to doubt. It may be questioned whether he was cast in a sufficiently strong mould to impress his age with the purpose which animated his satire; but there is no hollowness about the ring of his morality, and no unreality about his method of enforcing it. In brilliancy and in depth of both pathos and humour he falls below many of his fellow-dramatists; but in lightness and sureness of touch it would be difficult—with one exception—to name his superior. His merits, which have never been overrated, accordingly entitle him to a more than passing remembrance.

With Middleton's literary career part of that of the younger Heywood coincided; whose long life made him the contemporary of nearly all the dramatists mentioned in my next two, as well as in the present, chapters.

Thomas Heywood (1570 *circ.*—1650 *circ.*). His life.

THOMAS HEYWOOD[1], the typical playwright though not one of the great dramatic poets of his age, was a native of Lincolnshire. The date of his birth is unknown. There is an incidental proof in the dedication of one of his plays[2]

[1] *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood, now first collected, with Illustrative Notes and a Memoir of the Author.* 6 vols. London, 1874. Several of Heywood's plays were, as will be seen, edited for the *Shakesp. Soc.* by the late Mr. Barron Field and by Mr. Collier, who contemplated a complete edition of Heywood's extant plays for the Society.

[2] *The English Traveller.*

that he was a gentleman by birth; though, in accordance with the modesty which is one of his distinguishing features, he never touches on the fact. In his *Apology for Actors* he mentions his residence at Cambridge; and it is asserted by William Cartwright, who reprinted this tract just before the Restoration, that Heywood was a Fellow of Peterhouse. I can find no further evidence in support of this statement[1]. Probably in 1596, certainly in 1598, he was already at work as a player and dramatic author; in the latter year he is mentioned by Henslowe as a member and sharer in his company. To the 'quality' or profession which he had adopted he seems to have remained faithful during a long and marvellously active life. From Henslowe's company he transferred himself, at the accession of James I, to that of the Earl of Worcester, by whom he was 'bestowed' upon Queen Anne, after whose death he again became one of Lord Worcester's players. His devotion to his profession is shown by the tract which he published, in 1612, in defence of its antiquity and dignity, and in furtherance of its 'true use.' The circumstances which led to the composition of *An Apology for Actors* are unknown; its most striking part is the attempt to show by examples the direct moral influence for good of stage-plays.

His Apology for Actors (1612).

Of Heywood himself it might well be supposed that the theatre was all in all to him. It seemed to him (as he says in the vigorous lines, *The Author to his Booke*, prefixed to *The Apology*) a world in itself; and within its walls his ambition as a dramatist found its limits. He repeatedly expresses his indifference to the success which his plays may obtain and the reputation which they may achieve for him as mere literary compositions; he abstained from collecting them (which indeed would have been a Herculean task), and when he supervised their publication, did so in

His fertility as a playwright.

[1] The Rev. James Porter, the present Tutor of the College, has kindly made a close search for me on the subject, but without discovering any trace of Heywood. Nor is there any such in the University Registers; and it may at all events be assumed as certain that Heywood never took a degree at Cambridge. In *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon* (iv. 1) Sencer says: 'Petrus dormit securus: I was Sir of Peter house.' Sencer is I am sorry to say not a particularly respectable character; nor are the two Cambridge men in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* pleasing reminiscences.

self-defence rather than from choice[1]. His plays were, in a word, written to be acted, and with no other purpose. To the productivity of a dramatist who proceeds on this principle there are no bounds except those which are imposed upon all human effort. 'Sosicles, of Syracuse, gained seven victories, and wrote seventy-three tragedies.' Eubulus, Antiphanes, and Alexis among them contributed more than six hundred plays to the list of those included in Middle Comedy[2]. Lope de Vega wrote at least one thousand five hundred plays, of which only the 'minima parte,' according to his own account, were ever printed[3]. Similar feats, though hardly any to equal this, could no doubt be quoted of other 'heroes in fertility[4]' of dramatic production besides these; but in the case of Heywood, at all events, there is no reason to doubt his statement,—made before the close of his career as a playwright, in 1633,—that he had had 'either an entire hand, or at the least a main finger' in two hundred and twenty plays[5]. As a matter of course, he attempted nearly every species of drama known to the stage.

His non-dramatic works.

His literary activity was not however exhausted by his labours in this direction. Besides Lord Mayor's pageants and other entertainments and pieces in the form of dialogues, of which some at least have been designed for recitation, besides prologues and epilogues for the plays of other writers as well as his own, and for various other occasions, he also produced several narrative works. His history called *England's Elizabeth*, and containing an account of her *Life and Troubles, during her Minoritie*

[1] See the addresses *To the Reader* prefixed to *The Fair Maid of the West*, to *The English Traveller* ('it never was any great ambition in me, to be in this kind voluminously read'), and to *The Rape of Lucrece*.

[2] Donaldson, *Theatre of the Greeks*, pp. 163, 196.

[3] According to Lord Holland, the number of lines by Lope de Vega said to be actually printed amounts to 21,300,000. But this would include many other besides dramatic productions; and Lord Holland, who suspected the truth of some of the Spanish estimates, is himself suspected of an excess of credulity by Mr. Lewes (*The Spanish Drama*, p. 65).

[4] Platen in *Die Verhängnissvolle Gabel* (of Kotzebue)—

'Und war ein Held an Fruchtbarkeit, gleich Calderon und Lope.'

[5] See address *To the Reader* prefixed to *The English Traveller*.

from the Cradle to the Crowne (1631), will be referred to in connexion with one of his plays. He composed (in 1624) *Nine Books of various History concerning Women*[1]. He wrote at least part of a work, the loss of which has justly been regretted, to be called *The Lives of all the Poets, Modern and Foreign.* He produced a variety of other works which may be classed as historical romances; he translated Sallust, and accompanied his translation by a long preface 'On the Choice of History' (1608); he composed a heroic poem called *Great Britain's Troy* (1609). His *Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels* (1635) and the *Apology for Actors* already mentioned should be finally remembered in the list, which has never been drawn up with completeness, of his multifarious productions. His last publication is thought to have been his Life of *Ambrosius Merlin*, published in 1641[2]. But he seems to have been living in 1648, so that his life from the time of his arrival in London, if not his actual career as a dramatist, spans the history of the stage during a half century of the highest importance.

His extant plays.

His extant plays it would be difficult to group with any precision. But it will be seen that they include histories in a style recalling that of Shakspere's predecessors; romantic comedies of both an earlier and a later type, ranging from subjects of popular legend to subjects taken from domestic life; comedies treating of contemporary events and depicting contemporary manners; a series of mythological plays; one strange 'tragedy' intermixed with lyrical buffoonery; and one elaborate mask entitled to rank as a drama. In this order, which is not exactly coincident with that of chronological succession (so far as this can be ascertained), I proceed briefly to review the dramatic productions which remain to us from his indefatigable hand.

[1] It is referred to as

'a little, very little book
Of good and godly women'

in Fletcher and Shirley's *Night-Walker* (iii. 3).

[2] See Collier's Introduction to *An Apology for Actors.*

Chronicle Histories.

Two of Heywood's plays (each in two parts) are in construction and manner specimens of the slow-dying growth of the Chronicle History; but in the form in which we possess them, one of the pair is far superior to the other in vigour and freshness.

Edward IV (pr. 1600).

Of its kind nothing could be better than *The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV, containing his merie pastime with the Tanner of Tamworth, as also his love to faire Mistrisse Shore, her great promotion, fall and miserie, and lastly the lamentable death of both her and her husband; likewise the besieging of London, by the Bastard Falconbridge, and the valiant defence of the same by the Lord Maior and the Citizens* (printed in 1600)[1]. The several heads of this comprehensive title (of which the last is of course treated first) exhaust the main elements of the action of this play, which consists of a long succession of scenes, almost uniformly written with great spirit. Though there is accordingly no question of artistic construction, yet the author contrives to draw a variety of characters with much direct force. From the dissolute King and his villainous brother Gloster (most of whose traditional infamies, together with those of his agent Dr. Shaw, are set forth in the most explicit manner), down to the honest Dobs, the tanner of Tamworth, a figure borrowed from an old ballad and developed into one of the freshest characters of its kind in the Elisabethan drama, all the personages crowded into the action are living realities[2]. The story

[1] These plays were edited in the *Shakesp. Soc. Publ.* (1842) by the late Mr. Barron Field.

[2] The ballad of *King Edward IV and the Tanner of Tamworth* is printed in Percy's *Reliques*. The scenes (in Part I. of the play) in which the King in disguise seeks to find out the political opinions of the tanner, that in which Hobs entertains the King at his homely board with 'a good barley bag-pudding, a piece of fat bacon, a good cow-heel, a hard cheese, and a brown loaf,' together with a 'three man's song' of the battle of Agincourt, as well as the extremely characteristic one in which he proves his loyalty on the occasion of a county-meeting for the grant of a benevolence, are all excellent. Hobs' account of his difficulty as to matters of State is probably a very accurate representation of the condition of the popular mind at large in the times of the Roses: 'By my troth, I know not when I speak treason, when I do not There's such halting betwixt two Kings, that a man cannot go upright, but he shall offend t' one of them. I would God had them both for me.' Upon the

of the erring but gentle-hearted Jane Shore, whose repentance all but atones for her fault, and of her worthy husband, whose character is drawn with much generosity of feeling, is founded in its details on another old ballad, though the incident of the husband's return and participation in his unhappy wife's death seems to be an ingenious addition on the part of the dramatist[1]. The pathos in these scenes is of a very simple, but also of a very healthy description, and doubtless went home to the audience. In Jane's speech at the beginning of her penance there is real power; while the little scene of the Princes saying their prayers in the Tower is very touching. In spite of its rude form, this play, in the conduct of its action as well as in details[2], shows a great knowledge of dramatic effect.

If You know not Me, &c. pr. 1605 and 1606).

No similar praise can be given to the oddly-named *If You know not Me, you know no Bodie, or, The Troubles of Queene Elizabith* (printed 1605 and 1606)[3]; but it should be observed that Part I has come down to us in a most imperfect condition[4]. The construction is in any case as

whole however his jovial disposition seems, even *a priori* to incline him to the 'frank fanion' of the House of York; for King Harry, he has heard say, is 'a very advowtry man.'

[1] The ballad of *Jane Shore* will be found in Percy's *Reliques*. It is well known that the Jane Shore of real history survived Edward IV for thirty years. The character, which had been rendered very popular by Churchyard's Legend of *Shore's Wife* in the *Mirror for Magistrates* (see *The Returne from Pernassus*, i. 2), appears in a few scenes of *The True Tragedie of Richard III* (1594; see vol. i. p. 384); and a play of the name of *Jane Shore* was produced in 1602. Geneste (ix. 452) says this is alluded to in the prologue to Lacy's *Dumb Lady* (1669); but the mention of 'the pudding' seems to point to Heywood's play, the popularity of which is further attested by a reference to it in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1611). Rowe's *Jane Shore* (1714; *vide infra*) exhibits, so far as I observe, no traces of connexion with Heywood's play.

[2] Among the latter may be mentioned the stage-trick of a telling catchword in a humorous character. Maister Josselin's 'and so forth,' with which he is in the habit of indicating more than he can say, being 'somewhat defective in his utterance,' is an excellent notion, though of course it is repeated with unconscionable frequency. So in *If You know not Me &c.*, Hobson is always affirming by means of the phrase 'bones a' me;' when he rises to 'body a' me,' he explains that he 'swears not every day.' So, again, in *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* Master Flower can hardly speak without the phrase 'It is a good conceit.'

[3] Edited by Mr. Collier in the *Shakesp. Soc. Publ.*, 1851.

[4] See the Prologue, in which Heywood emphatically complains of the

inartificial as that of *Edward IV*, while the play as we possess it shows few signs of the same dramatic ability. The First Part accompanies the fortunes of the Princess Elisabeth from the accession to the death of Queen Mary, and is a mere hasty reproduction of the authorities—Stowe and the rest—which the dramatist had at hand[1]. Here and there is a touch of humour in the characters from common life (such as the three 'white-coat' soldiers, who try to avoid talking of State-affairs), which Heywood always hits off naturally; but there is no real animation in the piece, with the exception perhaps of Elisabeth's concluding address to her English Bible. In the Second Part we are carried away from national affairs to the civic traditions of London; and the play occupies itself with a laborious dramatisation of the foundation of the Royal Exchange by Gresham[2]—little enlivened by the misdoings of his scape-grace nephew—till at last it returns to matters of more general interest, and spins off, in a few scenes, Parry's conspiracy and the overthrow of the Spanish Armada[3]. The action of this uninteresting play is helped on by dumb shows, and in one instance by a Chorus.

The Four Prentices of London (1600 *circ.*).

Of *The Four Prentises of London, with the Conquest of Jerusalem* (printed 1615, but produced, as appears from the author's deprecatory preface, 'some fifteen or sixteen years' before), it is not necessary to say much. Heywood describes it as written in the 'Infancy' of his 'Judgment in this kind of Poetry' and in his 'first practice;' and it is in truth a production of primitive simplicity. Those who will

surreptitious taking down of his play—'scarce one word true'—'by stenography.' He made some additions to Part II, which appear in the text of 1633; but seems not to have cared about the printing. The title of the play is from the answer of old Hobson to the Queen's question 'what art you' in Part II. (p. 317.)

[1] Heywood himself composed a prose narrative of Queen Elisabeth's earlier life, entitled *England's Elizabeth &c.*, and printed in 1631. It is extant; and several extracts parallel to passages in the plays are given in Mr. Collier's edition.

[2] Alluded to in the Induction to Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle.*

[3] The long reference to Stukeley will be noticed in connexion with Peele's *Battle of Alcazar.* (Cf. vol. i. p. 208.)

may read in this dramatisation of an old story-book, how 'the olde Earle of Bulloign' had four sons, whom in his straits he apprenticed to four honourable trades in the city of London. How the four sons sought their fortunes in a ship bound for Jerusalem, but how by divers strange accidents they were carried, the one to Spain, the second to France, the third to Italy, the fourth to Ireland. How their sister likewise went forth disguised as a page. How the brothers, after undergoing adventures of the most stirring sort, all meet their sister and their father at the siege of Jerusalem, and finally obtain at its capture four royal crowns, thus doing their utmost, as their parent observes at the close, to make his 'joys,' and those of the audience, 'mere comical[1].'

The Fair Maid of the West (acted by 1617).

The Faire Maid of the West, or A Girl worth Gold[2] (printed 1631, but certainly acted by 1617), is a romantic comedy in two Parts. It is of a type in reality little in advance of that of *The Four Prentises*, and doubtless like the latter founded upon some popular narrative. The fortunes of the gallant master Spencer and the faithful Besse Bridges, who after blooming as the 'flower of Plymouth' in a tavern of that town becomes in the course of her travels the object of the worship of King Mullisheg of 'Fesse' and of the Duke of Florence, but rejects both for her true love, furnish forth matter for the two Parts of this play. But neither the tremendous adventures of the pair, nor the humours of Besse's 'drawer of wine' Clem, who accompanies his mistress across the seas, need be detailed[3]. Dumb shows, and at one point a Chorus, help on the action of this sufficiently entertaining specimen of a kind of historical drama not 'taken from the Chronicles.' Hey-

[1] As to the ridicule cast upon this play, as the type of the favourite kind of City drama, in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle, vide infra.*

[2] Edited for the *Shakesp. Soc. Publ.* (1850) by Mr. Collier.

[3] I must however vindicate to Clem the authorship of an anecdote which I have heard apocryphally connected with the name of—Sir Isaac Newton. 'First and foremost I have observed the wisdom of these Moors, for some days since being invited to one of the chief Bashaws to dinner, after meat, sitting by a huge fire, and feeling his shins to burn, I requested him to pull back his chair, but he very understandingly sent for three or four Masons and removed the chimney.'

wood hopes that it may prove 'as gracious' in the private reading, as it was 'plausible in the acting;' but the hope seems ambitious, though the play was acted before King James.

The Royal King and the Loyal Subject (pr. 1637).

The Royall King and the Loyall Subject[1] (printed 1637; but clearly written at an early period in Heywood's career, as is proved by the very noteworthy Epilogue[2]) is one of its author's best-known plays. Its hero is a kind of Patient Grissel of magnanimous loyalty; and the succession of tests which his all-enduring generous fidelity undergoes is, at least up to the end of the fourth act, well contrived. Here however the author's inventive power deserts him, and the fifth act, by adding another and superfluous step to the series, weakens the total impression. As in several of Heywood's plays, we have here a fine conception, and considerable knowledge of dramatic effect, but very few touches of poetic feeling such as the subject might have abundantly suggested. The bye-plot of the captain who tests his friends and society in general by an assumption of poverty, shows some shrewd knowledge of the world, but gratuitously introduces some offensive coarseness.

As Fletcher's play of *The Loyal Subject*, while dealing with the same story as Heywood's, is wholly different in treatment, it must be concluded that both plays were founded on the same narrative, which remains unknown.

A Woman Killed with Kindness (acted by 1603).

A Woman Kilde with Kindnesse[3] (printed in 1607, but known, from Henslowe's *Diary*, to have been acted by March 1603, when the author received the sum of £3 in

[1] Edited in the *Shakesp. Soc. Publ.* (1850) by Mr. Collier.

[2] In this Epilogue the author confesses 'that this play's old;' and reminds the Reader that

> 'We know (and not long since) there was a time
> Strong lines were not look'd after, but if rhyme,
> Oh then 't was excellent'—

which he says was in the days when doublets with big sleeves and 'those trunk-hose, which now the eye doth scorn' were all in fashion. The piece was therefore probably written about the close of the century, and this agrees with the quotation in Fairholt's *Costume in England*, p. 217, showing trunk-hose to have been in fashion in 1601.

[3] Edited by Mr. Collier in the *Shakesp. Soc. Publ.*, 1850, from the third edition, 1617.

full payment for the play) is justly regarded as one of Heywood's best works. Indeed, it is a play of no little significance in the history of our dramatic literature, furnishing as it does the earliest specimen of a domestic drama elaborated with care and fulness, while in sentiment it seems to belong to an age of softer sentiment than that in which it was produced. Its main plot is indicated by the title, which seems to have been a proverbial expression[1]. A country gentleman whose honourably trustful character is suggested by his name (Frankford) is at the beginning of the play introduced as the happy bridegroom of a 'perfect' bride. But the happiness of his married life is rudely overthrown by the treason of a friend on whom he has heaped every proof of kindness and hospitality. His wife, misled by weakness rather than by a disposition to sin[2], is discovered by him in her lover's arms; but instead of avenging her guilt by violence, he resolves to kill her by kindness. He sends her with every provision for her comfort to a solitary manor-house, enjoining on her only that he and his children may never see her countenance again. In her solitude and penitence, her heart breaks[3]; she sends for him to crave his forgiveness on her deathbed; and dies blessed by the lips which might have cursed her for her sin.

This exquisitely pathetic conception is carried out with

[1] See *Taming of the Shrew* (iv. 1):

'This is a way to kill a wife with kindness.'

This allusion doubtless provoked that in Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize* (iii. 4), where Petruchio speaking of the sufferings wives inflict upon husbands, says,

—'some few,
For those are rarest, they are said to kill
With kindness and fair usage.'

And in Ford's '*Tis Pity* (iv. 3) Vasques says of the husband who has discovered his wife's sin: 'He will go near to kill my lady with unkindness.' The expression also occurs (ironically used) in Fletcher and Shirley's *Night-Walker* (iii. 3):

'My daughter, that thou kill'dst with kindness, Jew.'

[2] How finely this is touched:

'What shall I say?
My soul is wand'ring, and hath lost her way.
Oh, master Wendoll, oh!'

[3] '*Anne.* I know the Lute; oft have I sung to thee:
We both are out of tune, both out of tune.' (Act v.)

dramatic force, and with a manly simplicity of tone showing true delicacy of feeling. We pity the weakness of the unhappy wife even in her fall, and feel that the punishment inflicted upon her is true justice. If in the scene where, after having become aware of her infidelity, the husband watches her demeanour and that of her paramour we are to some degree distracted by the cleverness of the way in which the situation is managed [1], the subsequent scene of the actual discovery is thrilling in its power. The terrible suspense of the situation when the husband accompanied by a faithful servant returns to his polluted home to surprise his guilty wife has few parallels in the Elisabethan drama—it might almost be termed a 'prose' reproduction of the terrors of *Macbeth* itself [2]. Doubly effective is the gentle softness of the close of the play, which seems to solve in a harmony of forgiveness the awful problem of the consequence of sin [3].

There seems no necessity to say more about the moral sentiment of this drama, which so far from palliating guilt by treating it as a thing to be wiped away by penitent tears, only seeks to suggest its lesson within limits carefully observed. A dramatic difficulty however may be noticed. The

[1] They play at cards, and the names of the games and of the moves in the game are twisted into a variety of allusions to the situation. This scene possibly suggested a not dissimilar one in Machin's *The Dumb Knight* (act iv), printed a year after Heywood's play; but the basis of the situations is different. A less elaborate exercise of ingenuity of the same kind occurs in Chapman's *Byron's Tragedy* (act iv). Cf. also Fletcher's *The Spanish Curate* (iii. 4), though here of course the equivoques are comic in intention.

[2] '*Frank.* . . . Hear'st thou no noise?
Nic. Hear? I hear nothing but the Owl and you.'
Frank. So; now my watch's hand points upon twelve,
And it is dead midnight: where are my keys?'

[3] '*Anne.* . . . . . .
Faintness hath so usurp'd upon my knees
That kneel I cannot: but on my heart's knees
My prostrate soul lies thrown down at your feet
To beg your gracious pardon: Pardon, O pardon me.
Frank. As freely from the low depth of my soul
As my Redeemer hath forgiven his death,
I pardon thee; I will shed tears for thee; pray with thee;
And in mere pity of thy weak estate,
I'll wish to die with thee.'

tempter as well as the tempted has to be dealt with by the injured husband; and it may be suggested that the effect of Frankford's sparing his wife would have been even greater, if he had not also spared her paramour,—or at least if the latter had been allowed to escape without the husband's consent. The play has a bye-plot—a quarrel between two country-gentlemen over a hawking-match [1], followed by the imprisonment and ruin of the one at the suit of the other, and their final reconciliation through the love of the oppressor for the sister of the oppressed—in part effectively worked out, but wholly secondary in its interest to the main plot, in the pathetic close of which all else is forgotten [2].

The English Traveller (pr. 1633).

The English Traveller (printed 1633), the strikingly modest preface to which has been already noticed, in tone and manner, as well as in the refinement of moral spirit which it exhibits, resembles *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. The character of the hero Young Geraldine is very gracefully drawn; he is one of the truest gentlemen of Elisabethan comedy. Having become endeared to the old husband of a young wife, he has vowed to her for the term of her husband's life a pure friendship, to be exchanged for marriage should they survive him. To silence the scandal which his friend Dalavill has reported to have arisen, he quits the house of his worthy host. It is not till afterwards that he discovers the wife to have been doubly false, and to be the paramour of Dalavill. The scene in which he discovers her sin, and that in which he upbraids her with it, are written with much force, though not equal to the corresponding scenes in the preceding play. The death of the unhappy woman satisfies our sense of justice in this work, which, notwithstanding the absence of a poetic touch, is dramatically most effective, and

[1] This scene (act i) is curious on account of its profuse introduction of terms from the art of falconry. The abundant use made by Shakspere of the same kind of phrases is well known.

[2] This scene is referred to in a passage of Heywood's *Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, where (iii. 1) Young Chartley cynically says; 'Here's such wetting of hand-kerchers, he weeps to think of his wife, she weeps to see her father cry. Peace fool, we shall else have thee claim kindred of the woman kill'd with kindness.'

highly creditable to the moral sentiment of its author. The bye-plot of the prodigal Lionell and the devices of his servant to delude his father when returning from beyond seas is derived from the *Mostellaria* of Plautus, which Heywood might have read either in the original or in an Italian version [1].

A Challenge for Beauty (pr. 1636).

A Challenge for Beautie (printed 1636) is a romantic comedy with a sufficiently interesting plot, upon the whole well carried out, though rather lengthy in its close. The proud Isabella Queen of Portugal, offended by the refusal of the noble Bonavida to extol her beauty and virtue as unparalleled, causes him to be exiled, with orders that he shall never return unless he can produce her match, and that if he reappears without such a treasure-trove, he shall suffer death. Bonavida in his travels finds a woman such as he seeks—it need hardly be said, in England. He exchanges rings with her in token of mutual fidelity, and thereupon returns to Portugal to announce his success. The Queen however causes him to be detained in prison, while she sends an intriguing villain to obtain by craft the ring of the fair English beauty, and thus enable herself to give the lie to Bonavida and his discovery. But the English girl, in the disguise of a page, crosses the seas to unravel the plot, and the Queen has to confess that Bonavida has redeemed the challenge. This story is treated with Heywood's usual directness, though connected with another less pleasing plot. The play is upon the whole better written than the average of Heywood's dramas; and the clown who accompanies Bonavida on his travels, and whose survey of the qualities of the ladies of different countries recalls (after a fashion) Portia's review of her suitors, is more than usually amusing.

[1] One by G. Berardo was printed in 1564 (Klein, iv. 251). With the scene in which the father is excluded from the house (on pretence that it is haunted) may be compared the similar, but infinitely superior scene in Ben Jonson's *Alchemist* (v. 1). Nor can I join in the admiration which has been bestowed upon that in which the drunken rout fancies itself a crew of shipwrecked mariners, and which gave rise to the eponymous scene of Cowley's *Naufragium Joculare* (cf. *infra*). This kind of boisterous fun is very far removed from the exquisite fooling of *Twelfth Night*.

A vigorous tone of patriotic English self-consciousness runs through this play, as through *The Fair Maid of the West.*

A Maidenhead well Lost (pr. 1634).

The comedy of *A Mayden-head well Lost* (printed in 1634), of which the plot is utterly offensive to modern feeling, is another romantic comedy distinguished by perspicuity of construction. But there is nothing in any of the characters to induce the reader to condone the story; the villain Stroza (whose appeal to 'Matchiuell' as the *genius loci* of Florence is happy) has a touch, but a very faint one, of Iago; the passion of the heroine Lauretta is only feebly drawn. Massinger is thought to have derived some hints from this play for his *Great Duke of Florence.*

The Fair Maid of the Exchange (pr. 1607).

I confess that I cannot agree with those critics who regard *The Fayre Mayde of the Exchange: with the pleasant Humours of the Cripple of Fanchurch*[1] (printed in 1607) as one of Heywood's more pleasing works. Indeed it is only from respect to the opinion of Charles Lamb, whose instinct in matters of the old drama is a safer guide than many men's arguments, that I include the play at all in the list of Heywood's works. It was printed anonymously; and though there is at least one passage—that quoted by Lamb[2]—of considerable humour, and at least one character —that of Fiddle[3]—animated by Heywood's easy gaiety, the manner of the whole strikes me as hard and unpleasing. A ballad called *The Cripple of Cheapside,* with a story similar to that of this play, exists from Dekker's hand[4]; and it is just possible that we have here the clue to a joint authorship.

This play is made up of three plots, of which however one only has any interest, while the least important is left in an odd state of incompleteness at the very close of the piece. But neither the genuineness of Master Flower's diamond, nor the loves of Mistress Mall (*i.e.* Moll) Berry

[1] Edited for the Shakespeare Society by Mr. Barron Field (1845).

[2] *Specimens,* p. 435.

[3] Fiddle's dignity in declining to enter into conversation when engaged in his duties to his mistress is excellent: 'Porter, I am not for you, you see I am perambulating before a female.'

[4] Stated to be printed by Mr. Collier in *New Particulars regarding Shakespeare's Works,* p. 46.

and her two suitors, have any element of attractiveness. The main plot of the piece, on the other hand, is very cleverly contrived; and in its management consists the chief merit of the play. It begins with the double rescue of the heroine Phillis Flower, the fair maid of the Exchange, from the hands of two ruffians, first by a Cripple, whose business is that of a 'drawer' (*i. e.* pattern-drawer) in the same building, and then, when the ruffians return, by a young gentleman of the name of Frank Golding. The imbroglio which hereupon arises is of a sufficiently amusing nature. Phillis is beloved by Frank's two elder brothers, and each of them confides his passion to the young fellow, who himself scorns to be a 'bond-slave to a woman's beck.' His fate however wills it otherwise; and he soon himself falls desperately in love with the same Phillis, becomes, as he says, 'a poor enamorate,' and bids farewell to a bachelor's gaiety: 'Therefore, hat-band, avaunt! ruff, regard yourself! garters, adieu! shoe-strings—so and so!' Phillis is however herself in love with none of the three brothers, but with her rescuer proper, the Cripple. Here we seem on the brink of a real novelty,—an attempt to secure the sympathy of the audience for a deformed hero. But instead of returning Phillis' passion, the Cripple becomes the agent of Frank's, helps him to make fools of his brothers, and finally to secure for himself the hand of the Fair Maid, whose opportune fickleness is left wholly unaccounted for.

The plot is, with the exception of its close, well contrived; and the Cripple's schemes in furtherance of Frank Golding's success are comically devised. The Cripple's literary resources are considerable; for he has inherited the library of a satirical poet, which

> 'was just nothing
> But rolls, and scrolls, and bundles of cast wit
> Such as durst never visit Paul's Churchyard;'

but he scorns to put his treasures to base use, to plagiarise according to the fashion of the hour, and to

> 'make enquiry
> Where the best-witted gallants use to dine;

> Follow them to the tavern; and there sit
> In the next room with a calves-head and brimstone,
> And overhear their talk, observe their humours:
> Collect their jests, put them into a play,
> And tire them too with payment, to behold
> What I have filch'd from them[1].'

But neither the character of the Cripple, nor that of the Fair Maid, seems to me drawn with any real freshness or vivacity; and the good-will of the reader is gained neither for the one nor for the other. All reasoning as to the possibility of bringing a deformed hero on the stage is therefore out of place in comments on this play; for the Cripple is merely a low-comedy character of an ordinary type[2], and there is no trace of either power or passion in Phillis' love for him, which she afterwards so suddenly abandons. I can only repeat that the play as a whole seems to me harsh and unpleasing in its execution.

The Wise Woman of Hogsdon (pr. 1638).

The Wise-woman of Hogsdon (printed 1638) strikes me as both in plot and execution one of the happiest of Heywood's comedies; indeed, its vivacity recalls Middleton, to whom Heywood is generally inferior in the lighter kind of drama. The plot turns on the devices by which 'Young Chartley, a wild-headed gentleman,' seeks to escape from the inconveniences of trigamy. The personage who 'bears the name of the Drama' describes herself as a lineal successor of Mother Bombie and similar worthies[3], and unites with the practice of fortune-telling, physic, palmistry, and the curing of 'mad folks,' a variety of disreputable trades or 'mysteries[4].' By her endeavours to put a whole complication wrongly right, she contrives to put everything rightly wrong; and in the end, all the characters being

[1] iii. 2 (part of the passage extracted by Lamb).

[2] The passage in which he says that he knows his

> 'unworthy self
> Too foul for such a beauty, and too base
> To match in brightness with that sacred comet
> That shines like Phoebus in London's element' (iv. 2),

is not low-comedy; but neither is it calculated to awaken much sympathy with so ready an acquiescence in the doom of deformity.

[3] ii. 1.

[4] iii. 1.

brought together in her domicile with an ingenuity recalling the last act of the best French comedy of intrigue (Beaumarchais' *Marriage of Figaro*), everything ends in accordance with the demands of moral justice, except that the wise woman herself escapes her proper doom of a duckpond. In such a play as this the Comedy of Manners is found answering its true end; and though this piece is full of coarseness, its tone is thoroughly healthy, while its execution is almost throughout entertaining[1].

Thomas Heywood and Brome's The Late Lancashire Witches (pr. 1634).

The Late Lancashire Witches (printed 1634[2]), in which Richard Brome[3] co-operated with Heywood, may be commended to the notice of students of our social history in the seventeenth century. The authors hope that a play dealing with such a theme as that which they have chosen may 'pass pardon'd though not prais'd.' There is some dignity in the character of the honourable country-gentleman (Generous) whose wife is discovered to be guilty of witchcraft, and a touch of pathos in his treatment of the unhappy creature. Again, there is an approach to humour in the character of his servant Robin, and in that of foolish Master Whetstone with his constant references to his aunt and uncle[4]; and a tolerably vivacious picture of English country life is incidentally unfolded in this drama. But its main object being to reproduce for the edification of the theatrical public certain sensational 'disclosures' of the day, and thus to make the stage a vehicle of ill-digested scandal, it cannot be read with sympathy,—even apart from the degrading character

[1] It opens with an excellent scene, which shows Young Chartley as a gambler. The Latin of the 'pedantical schoolmaster' Sir Boniface gives rise to an infinity of execrable puns.

[2] A character in this comedy is referred to in Field's *A Woman is a Weathercocke* (v. 2), printed in 1612. Either (see Collier's note *ad loc.*) Lawrence was an actual personage, or Heywood and Brome's play was written long before it was printed.

[3] As to Brome see below, chap. viii. The *name* of this play was afterwards borrowed by Shadwell (1681).

[4] He deviates into wit, however, when he calls an eloquent friend a gentleman who 'speaks like a Country Parson that had took his text out of Ovid's Metamorphosis.'

of the superstitions to which, as was only natural in writers of this age, the authors strive to give force. It is well known that the belief in witchcraft was common to the noblest as well as to the ordinary minds of this period of our national life[1]; and various illustrations of its prevalence are of course to be found in plays dealing with the subject, or containing references to it. But the intention of *The Late Lancashire Witches* is to make capital out of supposed actual occurrences, which a magisterial examination of the year 1633 had brought to public notice[2]. The district called the Forest of Pendle, in Lancashire, had some years previously become notorious for witchcraft; and some trials of supposed witches had been held in 1612. In 1633 another trial for witchcraft took place in the same district; and the boy whose deposition furnished the principal evidence was brought up to London, where he became the lion of the moment. He afterwards confessed that he had been suborned; and King Charles I, who had deigned to examine one of the supposed witches in person, finally pardoned all the seventeen persons who had been convicted[3]. To the excitement created by this business it was the object of Heywood and Brome's play to pander. In the view of its authors the tendency to follow witchcraft was of course an existing criminal mania; and with such a view their endeavour to depict its wretched results in disturbing the peace of families[4] was praiseworthy. But in their treatment of the subject the comic element overbalances the serious; and they were far too anxious to

[1] Mr. Crossley, in his Introduction to Potts' *Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancaster* (1613; *Chetham Soc. Publ.*, vol. vi, 1845), gives instances showing witchcraft to have been accepted as a fact by Bacon, Ralegh, Selden, Sir Matthew Hale, Hobbes, Cudworth, and Henry More.

[2] See Crossley, *ib.* p. lxv, where it is shown that Heywood and Brome closely followed in their play the terms of the deposition of Edward Robinson, which is quoted from Whitaker's *Whalley*, p. 213. It is also (according to Mr. Crossley) to be found (in a less accurate form) in Baines' *Lancashire*, i. 604.

[3] It seems to have been anticipated when the play was written that they would be sentenced not to death but imprisonment. See the Epilogue.

[4] Besides the *ménage* of Generous, another unhappy household is turned upside down by the witches (a son and a daughter being made to enforce the 'subjection of parents'), and converted into what one of the characters humorously calls a 'Family of Love.' (Cf. *ante*, p. 86.)

create an immediate effect to attempt more than a succession of grotesque scenes, vivaciously enough written (partly in what represents the Lancashire dialect), but contemptible as composing a dramatic action. The Witches themselves are of course drawn 'from the life.'

Heywood's The Golden, The Silver, The Brazen, and The Iron Age (pr. 1611, 1613, 1613, 1632 respectively).

The series of dramas—for so they must perforce be called—entitled respectively *The Golden, The Silver*[1], *The Brazen*, and *The Iron Age* (the last-named in two Parts), have come down to us in impressions bearing the dates respectively of 1611, 1613, 1613, and 1632. We have the author's word for it that these plays were 'often (and not with the least applause) Publicly Acted by two Companies, upon one Stage at once,' and that they 'at sundry times thronged three several Theatres, with numerous and mighty Auditories.' It is however not easy to conceive the nature of theatrical performances which, taking into account only the number of personages who make their appearance in these plays, must have taxed to the utmost the external resources of the Red Bull, and of the other playhouses in which they were produced. That one actor should on one occasion play several parts was the ordinary custom of the Elisabethan stage[2], which herein merely followed the example of the early modern as well as of the ancient Greek drama. But it is difficult to understand how the most robust imagination could, even with the aid of the simple appliances which doubtless indicated the several localities of the several episodes, have followed so interminable a succession of assumptions. For these plays, which have no organic connexion in their several parts or with one another (outwardly 'old Homer,' who appears throughout as presenter, serves as a connecting link), are simply a rapid succession of dramatised classical myths—from Saturn and 'Tytan' down to the 'punishment' of all the Greek

[1] These two have been edited by Mr. Collier in the *Shakesp. Soc. Publ.*, 1851.

[2] So it appears from the printed copy of *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, that 'eleven may easily act this comedy,' the twenty parts in which are distributed accordingly, the principal characters being assigned to one actor for each.

heroes 'that opposed Troy,' of whom Ulysses alone survives to speak the epilogue:

> 'And since I am the man solely reserv'd,
> Accept me for the Author's Epilogue.
> If he have been too bloody? 'tis the Story,
> Truth claims excuse, and seeks no further glory;
> Or if you think he hath done your patience wrong
> (In tedious scenes) by keeping you so long,
> Much matter in few words, he bade me say,
> Are hard to express, that lengthen'd out this Play.'

The old stories of Greek mythology never lose their charm; and in running through Heywood's versions of them one cannot altogether fail to sympathise with the pleasure which both he and his audience must be supposed to have derived from them. The author is, however, by no means invariably correct in his mythology[1]; and while generally fresh in manner, and occasionally visited by a breath of poetic feeling, he on the whole merely reproduces, without either, after the fashion of a Chaucer or a Lydgate, investing the legends of the ancient world with the spirit of his own age, or after the fashion of a Shakspere, converting epical or historical materials into real dramatic action. From this point of view *The Iron Age*, which deals with the story of Troy, may be specially regarded. Heywood is happiest in the treatment of legends containing a comic element,—such as that of Alcmena and Amphitryo in *The Silver Age* (where the Latin comedy so familiar to English playwrights is made use of[2]), and that of Venus and Mars in *The Brazen Age*, which like some other of the episodes in these plays is managed in a rather brazen fashion. In some of the tragical episodes however, notably in that of the death of Meleager 'the flower and pride of Calydon' in *The Brazen Age*, the writer must be allowed to have risen with his

[1] Nor, in one remarkable passage, in his physical geography. Jupiter at Amphitryo's door very indecorously avails himself of the results of the orisons of

> 'Josua Duke unto the Hebrew nation
> (*Who are indeed the Antipodes to us*).'

[2] The Mercury of Plautus' and of Dryden's *Amphitryo* is here Ganymed.

theme[1]. It would be easy to trace the authorities of which Heywood made use in this '*Revue*' of so many old friends of established and doubtful reputations. But the attempt is hardly worth the making; or those readers who are not afraid of having, as the indefatigable Homer says in *The Brazen Age*, their appetites cloyed 'with viands of one taste,' may be invited to make it for themselves. The real interest which these plays possess, is the speculation which they suggest as to the nature of the enjoyment furnished by them to the audiences which witnessed them. If the great body of the audience was really—as may be supposed—unfamiliar with the legends here dramatised, the vigour of imagination which could follow such a series of episodes must show how easily the popular mind may be trained to enjoy itself.

The Rape of Lucrece (pr. 1638, 5th ed.).

The Rape of Lucrece (printed 1638)—in the fifth edition—is a curious production, not that anything in the treatment of the subject, which is quite commonplace though comprehensive after Heywood's rapid fashion, is worthy of remark; but on account of the extraordinary notion of introducing into a tragedy on such a subject a character whose peculiarity consists in introducing comic songs, in and out of season. Among all the vagaries which the stage has at any time permitted itself in this direction, I know of none to equal this. The 'merry Lord' Valerius with his ditties contrives to eclipse all the serious interest of the drama, which he must have succeeded in completely transforming in the eyes of the public. Most of these songs are doggrel, and one or two are something worse; but there is at least one pleasing exception[2]. No doubt some odd antiquarian knowledge might be gleaned from this strange endeavour to conciliate the good-will of idle ears[3]: and

[1] Dyce has pointed out a very striking resemblance between a passage in *The Brazen Age* (Vulcan's description of his fall) and *Paradise Lost*, i. 742 (Middleton's *Works*, i. 350).

[2] The very pretty lyric beginning 'Pack clouds away, and welcome day.'

[3] Thus the song beginning

'The Gentry to the King's Head,
The Nobles to the Crown,
The Knights unto the Golden Fleece,
And to the Plough the Clown'—

with this hint I may pass by an otherwise uninteresting play.

Love's Mistress (pr. 1636).

Love's Maistresse, or The Queen's Masque (printed 1636) is noteworthy as holding the mean between a drama and a mask. It seems to have been performed several times both at Court and on the public stage. Though calling itself a mask, and stated to have been assisted in its production by the 'excellent inventions' of Inigo Jones [1], it is in fact an allegorical drama, having no reference to any special occasion. The subject is the story of Cupid and Psyche, based on Apuleius; and Apuleius himself, who appears as presenter, explains the meaning of the allegory as it proceeds to his collocutor Midas. The piece seems to be written with a greater expenditure of poetic imagery than is usual with Heywood; but the comic passages are mostly trivial, while the serious hardly rise to power. Of its kind however—and the kind is sufficiently tedious—this is a favourable specimen; and contrasts in the rapidity of its action with Lyly's mythological dramas.

Heywood and William Rowley's Fortune by Land and Sea (pr. 1655).

Of *Fortune by Land and Sea* [2] (not printed till 1655, *i.e.* in the time of the Commonwealth, when the theatres had been closed [3]) William Rowley was joint author with Heywood. To discriminate between their respective

furnishes a list of popular London taverns; while 'the cries of Rome' (one of the songs which 'were added by the stranger that lately acted Valerius his part') may be compared, as a compendium of London street-cries, with Lydgate's *London Lyckpeny*.

[1] See *To the Reader*.—Perhaps the procession of (human) Asses whom Apuleius introduces to the notice of Midas may be regarded as supplying the place of the anti-mask. The 'Ignorant Ass' is well characterised:

> 'That, Midas, is thy brother,
> A piece of moving earth, illiterate, dull;
> Who having in himself nought commendable
> Envies what's good in others; and yet dare
> In his own impudence, with Arts compare:
> A block, a stone, yet learning he'll revile,
> And a dull Ignorant Ass we will him style.'

The story of Psyche was afterwards dramatised by Molière, from whom Shadwell borrowed for *Psyche* (1674).

[2] Edited for the *Shakesp. Soc. Publ.* (1854) by Mr. Barron Field.

[3] As the proclamation mentioned in the text runs in the Queen's name, Mr. Field conjectures that the play may have been sketched by Heywood in Elisabeth's time.

shares is impossible; but I should be inclined to suspect Rowley's stronger hand in some well-written passages standing out from the level of a tolerably commonplace piece, in the first act[1]. The plot is constructed after the fashion of a narrative rather than of a drama; and there is hardly a character of interest in the play. It begins with considerable vigour with the murder of one of Old Forrest's sons in a gambling-house; his other son then avenges his brother's death by killing the murderer in a duel, and has to flee for his life. He is sheltered by the young wife of the father of his sister's husband; but this contact between the two plots is merely fortuitous. He then manages to go to sea, where he makes a fortune after routing some pirates. His sister too has had her troubles; for her father-in-law, displeased with his son's marriage with a poor girl, disinherits him, and obliges him to become a labourer on the paternal estate. He dies intestate; and thus everything ends satisfactorily, especially as at the right moment the brother returns with his fortune made, and marries his preserver. All this makes up a good homespun story, such as Heywood understood how to put together, while the language is, except perhaps in the first act, not above his ordinary level. The fun is as usual provided by a clown, who puns in Heywood's most deplorable manner, especially on the occasion of the reading of a proclamation, like Cain in the old mystery[2].

Heywood's pageants, dialogues,

Besides the above plays, we possess several pageants from Heywood's hand, all dedicated, as their sonorous Latin titles imply[3], to the honour and glory of the City of London. The '*Pleasant Dialogues and Drammas,*

[1] *e. g.* Old Harding's cynical speech:

> 'Go to Cheapside with virtue in your purse
> And cheapen Plate, or to the Shambles hie,
> And see what meat with virtue you can buy,' &c. (i. 2.)

[2] Cf. vol. i. p. 37.

[3] *London's Jus Honorarium* (1631); *Londini Sinus Salutis* (1635); *Londini Speculum* (1637); *Porta Pietatis* (1638), which is particularly orthodox in tone; and *Londini Status Pacatus* (1639), which contrasts the peaceful prosperity of the English capital with the miseries of war, such as (a marginal note reminds us) had raged 'lately in Germany.'

selected out of Lucian, Erasmus, Textor, Ovid,' &c. hardly require examination, as not properly belonging to dramatic literature. Some of them however, as the pastoral drama of *Amphrisa*, and the drama from Ovid called *Jupiter and Io*, more justly deserve the name of 'stage-poetry' which the author applies to some of these productions, and were very probably brought out as entertainments. One has already been incidentally noticed[1].

Prologues, and epilogues.

Heywood's indefatigable pen also produced several prologues and epilogues for entertainments of various kinds and for plays—among them two prologues and epilogues to *The Jew of Malta*, and one of each kind to *Richard III*—for the 'encouragement' of 'a young witty Lad' who played the part of the hero 'at the Red Bull.' In short, the activity of Heywood is almost inexhaustible, even on the evidence of what remains of his works; and though a *factotum* of the stage had become an impossibility by this time, he if any man could have supplied the demands appropriate to such an office—always with respectable ability, though perhaps rarely with the genius which can make itself perceptible even in mere craftsman's work.

Summary of his powers as a dramatist.

For a study of Heywood's productions—including a reperusal of old favourites, and animated by a desire to do full justice to an author to whom I have long felt attracted by a pious though perhaps apocryphal bond—has convinced me that the highest praise to be bestowed upon him is that which was given by Tieck when he called *him* 'the model of a light and rapid talent[2].' Carried, may be, from the tranquil court of Peterhouse to a very different scene of intellectual effort, he worked during a long and laborious life with an energy in itself deserving of respect, and manifestly also with a facility attesting no ordinary natural endowment. His creative power was, however, of that secondary order which is content with accommodating itself to conditions imposed by the prevailing tastes of the

[1] *The Man-hater*, cf vol. i. p. 420.

[2] *Shakspeare's Vorschule*, vol. i. Vorrede, p. xl. *The Lancashire Witches* is translated in this volume.

day. It may be merely his 'prentice hand that he tried on a dramatic reproduction of chronicles and popular story-books; but he was hardly more successful in his later endeavours to use his classical lore as the materials for dramatic entertainment. Happily for him, a taste had formed itself for the dramatic treatment of domestic stories; and in the works which he produced on subjects of this description his tact as a playwright was elevated by the pathetic power which he undoubtedly possessed. Of humour he had no large share; there is a general resemblance among his clowns, and as a rule little individuality in his other comic figures. The lesser sort of wit—that kind of wit which can be acquired like any other literary accomplishment—he displays in abundance; of all the Elisabethan dramatists he is the most indefatigable, and to my mind the most intolerable, punster. In outward form he is almost as Protean as in choice of subject and of treatment; his earlier plays especially abound with rhymes; in general, fluent verse and easy prose are freely intermixed. But his strength—particular passages and scenes of pathetic force apart—lies in that which goes far towards making a successful dramatist, while it is possessed by many not entitled to rank as dramatic poets. Heywood thoroughly understands what is meant by an effective dramatic situation; and to the production of effective dramatic situations his main attention is directed. The climax of *A Royal King and a Loyal Subject*, the catastrophe of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, and the final concatenation and *dénouement* of *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon* would in any period of the stage make the fortune of any play. To playwrights the study of Heywood cannot be sufficiently commended.

His pathos in the domestic drama.

His masterly skill in the invention of situations.

Charles Lamb's well-known characterisation of Thomas Heywood as 'a prose Shakspere' must not however be allowed to lead to an over-estimation of his merits as a dramatist. With a later interpreter[1] of this well-known phrase, we may hold it warranted in two respects.

In what sense only he may be called 'a prose Shakspere.'

[1] The writer of an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, April 1841, *Beaumont and Fletcher and their Contemporaries*, quoted in Heywood's *Works*, Introductory Memoir, p. xxx.

The moral purity of Heywood, as compared with other dramatists of his age, recalls that of his greatest contemporary. And the degree of 'natural repose' in his scenes is certainly refreshing to any one who turns to them from the uncomfortable heat of a Dekker or the unnatural spasms of a Marston. But to be even a prose Shakspere, Thomas Heywood lacked that power of characterisation without which all resemblances to Shakspere are merely superficial. Of depth of feeling he shows many signs; but it is beyond his power to create living individualities by means of an intuitive sympathy with the varieties of human character. Even in his two best serious dramas, it is the situations rather than the characters as developed out of them which engage our attention. A prose Shakspere would have made the erring wife and the imperturbably loyal vassal figures which we could remember by themselves, living beings of whom we could say, 'Thus, and not otherwise, they must have acted.' Heywood falls something short of this; and I cannot but consider Lamb's description of him as essentially misleading—which indeed such epigrammatic labellings usually are.

Rapidity without carelessness of production, effectiveness in construction and inventive power in the conception of situations, tenderness of feeling and vivacity of touch, together with an entire absence of affectation, and consequently a signal freedom from false pathos, such seem to me Heywood's most distinguishing characteristics as a dramatist. As a man, so far as we can judge, he resembled Shakspere in one characteristic, which is nearly the most loveable of all when it accompanies merit and success. It is impossible to observe how he makes use of the numerous occasions on which he has to speak of his works or himself without arriving at the conviction, that as he was one of the most zealous of workers in a profession made honourable by worthies such as he, so he was one of the most modest of our dramatists—perhaps of our poets—in his estimate of himself. As the servant of the theatre during a long period, including both the height of its national importance and the beginning of its visible

Internal evidence of his modesty and moral worth.

degradation and decline, he might with a light heart indite his apology for himself and his brethren; since in all probability there was nothing in his life, as there is certainly nothing in his works, in so far as they have come down to us, for which he needed to blush.

Samuel Rowley (d. 1633 *circ.*).

By the side of Thomas Heywood room may be appropriately found for a word in reference to SAMUEL ROWLEY, of whose two extant plays one at least is in the same popular style as so many of Heywood's productions. Of Samuel Rowley's name repeated mention is made by Henslowe, of whose company he was a member[1]. On the title-page of his Chronicle-History, to be noticed immediately, he describes himself as 'Servant to the Prince' (*i.e.* Henry Prince of Wales); and from the fact that his other extant play, *The Noble Soldier*, published in 1634, is accompanied (as was usual only with posthumous publications) by a publisher's preface, which the other, published in 1632, lacks, it has been conjectured by Elze that Rowley probably died between the dates of these two publications.

Besides his two extant plays, names of six wholly or partly by him are known. Three of these (*Judas, Sampson*[2], and *Joshua*) were on scriptural subjects; a fourth, *Hymen's Holiday, or Cupid's Fagaries*, was acted at Court in 1612, and again in 1633, and was probably of the nature of a mask; a fifth, a tragedy called *Richard III*, has already been incidentally referred to[3]; a sixth was a comedy called *Hard Shifte for Husbands, or Bilboes the Best Blade.* Of

[1] See especially *Diary*, p. 260, where his engagement as a 'covenente servante' is noted. With William Bird he is mentioned (*ib.* p. 228) as having made 'adicyones in Docter Fostes' (cf. vol. i. p. 183). Barron Field (Introduction to *Fortune by Land and Sea*, p. vi) follows Haslewood in referring Meres' mention of 'Maister Rowley' (in the *Palladis Tamia*) to Samuel; but according to Malone, whose argument is accepted by Mr. Dyce, Meres means neither of these Rowleys, but a third, of the name of Ralph. See Introduction to Dyce's Beaumont and Fletcher's *Works*, p. lix, *note.*

[2] 'Believe it, we saw Sampson bear the town-gates on his own neck from the lower to the upper stage, with that life and admirable accord, that it shall never be equalled, unless the whole new livery of porters set to their shoulders.' Middleton, *The Family of Love* (i. 3).

[3] Vol. i. p. 386.

the two plays which have been preserved, *The Noble Soldier* (printed 1634) appears from Elze's account to be a romantic comedy of intrigue, of which the scene is laid in Spain, and which enforces the sanctity of the institution of troth-plight[1]. This play I have not seen; but its literary interest must in any case be inferior to that of Samuel Rowley's only other extant dramatic production.

When You See Me, You Know Me (pr. 1605).

When You See Me, You Know Me, or The Famous Chronicle Historie of King Henrie the Eight, with the Birth and Vertuous Life of Edward Prince of Wales[2], derives its claim to attention from its general identity in subject and partial coincidence in details with Shakspere's *Henry VIII.* As the date of the latter is keenly disputed, it is difficult if not impossible to arrive at any conclusion as to the relative priority of Shakspere's and Rowley's plays[3]. If Shakspere's was produced in an earlier form so soon as 1603, it may have been written as well as brought on the stage before Rowley's, which is known to have been printed in 1605. (The entry of an *Enterlude on King Henry VIII* in the Stationers' Registers very probably refers to it.) But if Shakspere's play was not written till a later date, it must be concluded that Shakspere was influenced by Rowley's play in the selection of some incidents which both have in common, though nearly all of these incidents are to be found in Holinshed. On the other hand, Elze is of opinion that Rowley probably derived two passages from *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merchant of Venice*, which beyond all reasonable doubt were of earlier dates than his Chronicle-History[4]. I may as well confess that I do not attach much importance to

[1] Cf. Shirley's *The Doubtful Heir* (v. 4), where a marriage seems to be held to be rendered invalid by the mere declaration of a previous engagement of this kind on the part of the supposed husband.

[2] Edited with an *Introduction and Notes* by K. Elze (Dessau and London, 1874), from whom I have borrowed the above data as to S. Rowley's other plays.

[3] Cf. vol. i. p. 443 *seqq.*

[4] *viz.* the King's treatment of the page who is putting the garter round his leg (cf. *The Taming of the Shrew*, iv. 1) and a passage in Doctor Tye's eulogy on music (cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, v. 1). The former of these coincidences is however not very striking.

such questions as to priority, feeling convinced that neither Rowley nor Shakspere would have hesitated for a moment to appropriate such materials in the way of incidents as commended themselves to their use.

Any further comparison between Shakspere's *Henry VIII* and Rowley's play is out of the question; for the two productions stand on an utterly different level. That with which Rowley's contents itself is, considering the period in which his work was produced, a remarkably low one. The play was performed by the Prince of Wales' company, and was probably meant to secure the favourable attention of their youthful patron by the glory which it seeks to shed on the person of another Prince of Wales of similar promise, whose birth, education[1], and abilities (particularly in the matter of religious controversy) form a prominent part of the action. For the rest, the play is a bewildering jumble of transposed history and rollicking inventions. The former element will be sufficiently exemplified by the circumstance that Cardinal Wolsey's fall is made to take place considerably after Henry's marriage to Catharine Parr; and chronology is throughout treated with the same freedom. The real hero of the play is not so much King Henry himself as Will Summers the Court-fool. The King indeed performs a Haroun-Alraschid-like exploit of visiting the City at night, engages in a personal combat with 'Black Will,' and spends an hour or so in the Counter, while his general bluster is of a kind to do one's heart good. But Will Summers, whose figure has already been met with in an earlier play[2], completely rules the roast at King Henry's Court, and is provided with a foil after his own kind in Wolsey's timorous fool Patch. It is hardly worth while to lose more words on this boisterous production, which is cheerfully intended to foster contempt in the Court for the City, as well as a healthy national prejudice against the Pope and everything that is his. The

[1] Vicarious in the matter of personal correction, which 'young Edward Browne,' who is knighted for his pains, has to undergo on the Prince's behalf.

[2] Nash's *Summer's Last Will and Testament*; cf. vol. i. p. 230. Will's surname is spelt in various ways.

author is perfectly successful in depicting King Henry's Court as a bear-garden where high policy, religious controversy, births, deaths and marriages, and the unsavoury witticisms of Will Summers are freely intermingled, and fully justifies the epithets by which the Prologue to Shakspere's *Henry VIII* seems to characterise the play.

William Rowley d. after 1637.

Samuel Rowley's namesake, WILLIAM ROWLEY, should perhaps properly be mentioned in a later chapter, as no independent play of his is known to have been produced in Elisabeth's reign. He was however associated as a dramatic author with so many of the writers already passed under review—with Dekker, with Middleton, with Heywood, not to mention the wholly incredible testimony connecting his name with that of Shakspere himself—that he may be introduced here, rather than in connexion with the writers of a later group, several of whom (Fletcher, Massinger, Webster, and Ford) he is likewise stated to have assisted in their labours. It would indeed be strange if an author so ready to join hands had been able to preserve a marked individuality of his own. I cannot however but think that the natural lightness of Middleton was tempered by a graver spirit in some of the productions in which Rowley co-operated with him, though I am unfortunately not in a position to say whether anything avowedly from Rowley's hand bears out the conjecture that this element was actually due to him.

William Rowley (who has been confounded not only with his namesake Samuel, but with another Rowley of the name of Ralph[1]) is mentioned as an actor of the Duke of York's company in the year 1610; but already in 1607 he had produced, together with Day and Wilkins, a play called *The Travailes of Three English Brothers* (the brothers Shirley). In 1613 he was a leading member in the same (now the Prince of Wales') company; in 1637 he married; and nothing further is known of his life (except that he acted in one of his own plays and in a mask by Middleton).

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 131, *note*. In Mr. Dyce's note there quoted will be found a list of the plays which Rowley wrote independently, or with others besides Fletcher.

A tradition handed down by Langbaine records that he was 'beloved by those great men, Shakespeare, Fletcher and Jonson[1].'

A Match at Midnight (pr. 1633).

Of Rowley's four extant plays I have only been able to acquaint myself with *A Match at Midnight* (printed 1633[2]), which can only be described as an outrageous farce with an extremely brief moral. Its heroine is a supposed widow, whose pursuers are baffled after five acts of intolerable grossness, unredeemed even by the vivacity and humour which cannot be denied to be displayed in the piece. The Welshman Randall is one of the most amusing representatives of a favourite character of Elisabethan comedy.

William Rowley's other extant plays are *A New Wonder*, *A Woman never Vext* (a comedy, printed 1632[3]), *All's Lost by Lust* (a tragedy, printed 1633), and *A Shoo-maker a Gentleman* (a comedy, printed 1638).

Other dramatists of this period.

Besides the above-mentioned writers, the names of many other dramatists whose contributions to the popular stage belong in part at least to this period have been preserved to us; and in the case of a few of them, an isolated play remains to testify to the nature of their literary capacities. Of the thirty authors mentioned in Henslowe's *Diary* as having received pay from him during the years from 1598 to 1601, several of whom wrote for other companies besides his, some whose names are worthy of preservation have been noted in previous chapters[4]. A few may be mentioned here, as belonging in point of time to the group of Shakspere's contemporaries rather than that of his predecessors—though of course neither term can be strictly employed in the case of writers as to the dates of whose literary labours we are so imperfectly informed.

[1] Barron Field, *u. s.*, p. vii.

[2] Printed in Dodsley's Collection (1825), vol. vii.

[3] Announced for one of the later volumes of Mr. Hazlitt's new edition of Dodsley. Mr. Dyce terms this William Rowley's 'best piece,' and states that an alteration of it was successfully performed in 1824.

[4] For a complete list see Collier, iii. 106. It includes the name of John Webster, whose extant independently written plays however all belong to the reign of James I, and perhaps that of his successor.

Henry Porter's The Two Angry Women of Abington (pr. 1599).

Of HENRY PORTER (possibly identical with a bachelor of music, of Christ Church, Oxford, mentioned by Wood) only a single comedy is extant, the gaiety of which makes us wish that more of his productions had been preserved. Charles Lamb, however, perhaps goes too far in describing *The Two Angrie Women of Abington*[1] (printed 1599) as no whit inferior to either *The Comedy of Errors* or *The Taming of the Shrew*. Though here and there it contains passages of real elegance of diction, its humour is on the whole of an extremely robust kind; I hardly know of any other Elisabethan comedy which so much recalls the vigorous manner of John Heywood. The conception of the plot is diverting enough: two 'curst wives' (whose temper reveals itself at the beginning of the piece over a game at 'tables') do their utmost to make their husbands unhappy, and to prevent a desirable match between their respective children. This popular theme is treated with unflagging spirit, though towards the close the plot seems unnecessarily complicated. Among the minor characters will be noted the serving-man, Nicholas Proverbs, who garnishes his speech after the fashion of Sancho Panza, and the pleasing little sketch of Lady Smith, a country-squire's wife, who has a horror of field-sports, and is almost as 'pitous' towards animals as Chaucer's Prioress.

John Cook's Green's Tu Quoque (pr. 1599?).

JOHN COOK is not mentioned by Henslowe, nor does anything certain seem to be known of him but that he was the author of fifty epigrams, entered on the Stationers' Register in 1604[2]. He may however be noted here as the author of *Green's Tu Quoque, or The Citie Gallant*[3], which according to a doubtful authority was printed as early as 1599—the first dated edition was published in 1614. The great popularity which this play seems to have enjoyed was doubtless due to the acting of Thomas Green, famous in clowns' parts, whose performance of the comic

[1] Edited for the Percy Society (*Publications*, vol. v) by Mr. Dyce; and also printed in vol. vii. of the new edition of Dodsley.

[2] See Collier's *Memoirs of the Principal Actors, &c.*, p. 185, where it is conjectured that John was the brother of Alexander Cook, who performed in several of Jonson's plays.

[3] Printed in vol. ii. of *The Ancient British Drama.*

character of Bubble gave to the comedy the name by which it is remembered. The satire of the piece is directed against the upstarts of the City. Beginning as a comedy of character, it lapses into one of intrigue, and is in parts to be avoided. Bubble is a serving-man who, on becoming wealthy, apes the manners and phrases ('Tu Quoque' in particular[1]) of the fashionable world. The 'swaggerer' in this play is of the family of Ancient Pistol.

Among other contemporaries of Shakspere, RICHARD HATHWAYE may perhaps claim notice by reason of his surname, and WENTWORTH SMITH by reason of his initials[2]. The name of GEORGE WILKINS has been associated in yet another way with that of Shakspere[3]; and I may therefore here note the single play remaining from his hand (he is not stated to have written any other alone), although the date of its publication is 1607. *The Miseries of Inforst Marriage*[4] is a harrowing domestic drama of the type of *The Witch of Edmonton*[5], more powerful in its conception than in its execution, which is very lengthy. It contains what appears to be a reminiscence from *Othello*[6].

George Wilkins' Miseries of Enforced Marriage (pr. 1607).

Finally, to the popular drama of this period appear to belong a few anonymous works deserving a word of notice. *Grim, the Collier of Croyden*[7] (said by one authority to have been printed as early as 1599, but the first known copy, which describes the play as by 'I. T.', bears the date of 1662), re-introduced to the stage a character of very

Anonymous plays of this period.

Grim, the Collier of Croydon (pr. 1599?).

[1] Shadwell mentions 'Tu Quoques' as one of the innumerable nicknames for the roystuers of the town.

[2] Cf. Collier, iii. 99. Wentworth Smith was perhaps the 'W. S.' announced as author of *The Puritan* (cf. vol. i. p. 461), and may also, on the same grounds, be thought to have written *The Life and Death of Thomas Cromwell* (*ib.* p. 464).

[3] See vol. i. pp. 420, 422.

[4] Printed in Dodsley's *Old Plays*, vol. v (1825). Wilkins' play was in part adapted (and degraded) by Mrs. Aphra Behn in *The Town Fop, or Sir Timothy Tawdrey* (acted 1676), where a divorce conveniently solves the difficulty of the situation.

[5] *Ante*, p. 48.

[6] 'Women are in churches saints, abroad angels, at home devils.' (Act i.)

[7] Printed in *The Ancient British Drama*, vol. iii, and in the new edition of Dodsley's *Old Plays*, vol. viii.

ancient fame[1]. But the Collier and his doings have only a secondary share in the action of this extraordinary play, which turns on the idea (resembling that of one of Jonson's comedies) of an emissary being sent by the 'consistory' of the infernal regions to ascertain the truth about the conditions of married life in the upper world. The story is taken from an Italian source[2]. Accompanied by his servant Akercock, who assumes the name of Robin Goodfellow, he visits England, where he thinks to secure the hand of the daughter of the Earl of Kent (whom he cures of dumbness), but has to content himself with her waiting-maid, faring ill even with her. Among the other characters is St. Dunstan, who appears as a kind of presenter.

A Knack to Know a Knave pr. 1594).

The same saint re-appears in another and probably still earlier work, which possesses a certain interest of its own as carrying us back, by means of its principal character, to a primitive phase of the English drama—*A Knacke to Knowe a Knave*[3]. This play (printed 1594, as 'sundrie tymes' played by Alleyn and his company), besides being generally old-fashioned in style and construction, contains a personage taking the name of an abstract quality, after the fashion of the moralities. 'Honesty,' whose instinctive power of knowing a knave when he sees him gives the play its name ('Honesty knows a knave by his cap'), is not very organically fitted into the action, which is altogether loosely constructed. The scene is England in the reign of King Edgar the Peaceable; and Dunstan (whose accomplishments in the magical art are not forgotten) is of course introduced. His nephew Ethelwald is sent by the King to woo the fair Alfrida as his proxy, instead of which he woos her on his own account and marries her. His attempts to deceive the King having been duly exposed, and Dunstan having (for a not very intelligible purpose) summoned the Devil to his assistance,

[1] Cf. vol. i. pp. 72, 115.

[2] *viz.* the story of *The Marriage of the Devil*, ascribed to Macchiavelli. A similar story occurs in Straparola's *Piacevoli Notti*. Both are printed as an appendix to John Wilson's *Belphegor* (1691) in Wilson's *Dramatic Works*. Cf. *infra* as to this play, which treats the same subject.

[3] Printed in the new edition of Dodsley's *Old Plays*, vol. vi.

Ethelwald is finally forgiven by Edgar[1]. The rest of the play is occupied with Honesty's successful exposure of knavery, especially in the case of the four hopeful sons of the Bailiff of Hexham (a Courtier, a Priest, a Coneycatcher, and a Farmer), who endeavour *pro virili* to carry out the pious dying injunctions of their father, after he has himself been carried off by the Devil early in the piece. A comic interlude is furnished by the 'merrimentes' of the men of Gotham, in receiving the King into their town. The famous Kemp bore a part in this amusing scene, which must have been a great favourite, and was doubtless supplemented by the 'gag' usual in such cases[2]. Altogether this play seems to have enjoyed the utmost popularity[3].

The Life and Death of Jack Strawe (printed 1593[4]) is a

[1] The story of Ethelwald and Elfrida, derived from the old 'Song of King Edgar, showing how he was deceived of his Love,' is the subject of several later plays—Ravenscroft's *King Edgar and Alfreda* (printed 1667); Rymer's *Edgar, or The English Monarch* (licensed 1677; for a comparison of these two plays see Geneste, i. 223); Aaron Hill's *Elfrid* (1710), afterwards remodelled under the title of *Athelwold* (1732); and Mason's *Elfrida* (1752; altered for the stage by Colman in 1772, and by the author himself in 1779). Mr. Collier has pointed out the resemblance between this part of the plot of *A Knack to Know a Knave* and the charming episode in Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (printed 1594); there is a still closer resemblance between parts of the action and that of Massinger's *Great Duke of Florence*.

[2] The scene opens with all the freshness of what is sure to be a 'hit:'

> '*Miller*. Now, let us constult among ourselves,
> How to misbehave ourselves to the king's worship'—

but Mr. Collier (see his account of Kemp in *Memoirs of the Principal Actors, &c.*, p. 97) is doubtless right in supposing the real fun of the 'merriments' to have been left to be supplied by the actors.

[3] Its success gave rise, in the same year 1594, to the production of a counterpart called *A Knack to Know an Honest Man*, and Mr. Collier (Introduction, p. 26) gives other evidence to illustrate the popularity of the piece.—The typical character of Piers Plowman, as the representative of the 'poor' and oppressed 'commons,' should not be overlooked. Its popularity had been revived by Robert Crowley's publication of Langland's *Vision* in 1550; and the *Crede* was printed soon afterwards—probably in 1553. (See Mr. Skeat's Preface to his edition of Pierce the Ploughman's Crede, *Publications of the Early English Text Society*, 1867.)

[4] Reprinted in vol. v. of the new edition of Dodsley.—Is there any authority in the books for the test imposed by the rebels upon the obnoxious foreign merchants,

> 'As many of you as cannot say bread and cheese
> In good and perfect English, ye die for it'?

To which an unfortunate Fleming can only reply *Broed and Keyse* (act ii). The device is a familiar one in the history of risings of the kind.

The Life and Death of Jack Straw (pr. 1593).

vigorous reproduction of a well-known episode of English history, apparently designed for the special gratification of the citizens of London. Written partly in blank-verse, partly in doggrel rhymed lines, it is devoid neither of vivacity nor of rough humour; and there is some insight into historical truth shown in the speeches of King Richard, who appears kindly at heart, as he really seems to have been, towards the lower orders. The play (which has only four acts) is however evidently written with haste, and is only valuable as a genuine remnant of the popular stage.

Look About You (pr. 1600).

A similar production is the 'Pleasant Commodie called *Looke About You*[1]' (pr. 1600), which by any other name might have equally diverted the groundlings. This odd specimen of the Chronicle-History run to riot treats of events connected with the resistance of the sons of King Henry II against the authority of their father, and especially of the adventures of the faithful and outspoken Earl of Gloucester. I know of no play in which so many persons assume so many disguises—Skink, who opens the series in that of a hermit, being especially active; but the Princes, Lady Faulconbridge, and 'Robert Hood' likewise bearing their part. The result is an action of peculiar briskness; but there are occasional touches of real dramatic vigour, and in one passage (Richard's praise of music in scene the twenty-eighth) even of poetic feeling. A more strangely, and in one sense 'artfully,' managed action than that of this play it would be difficult to imagine.

Wily Beguiled pr. 1606.

Wily Beguiled[2], though not printed till 1606, is clearly of a considerably earlier date. It must however have been written after the production of *The Merchant of Venice*, a famous passage in which is rather unceremoniously adapted[3]. The play is worth reading as an instance of the extremely simple fare which occasionally contented an Elisabethan audience. A play called *Spectrum*—doubtless of the favourite 'Looking-Glass' species[4]—seems

[1] Printed in vol. vii. of the new edition of Dodsley.

[2] Printed in vol. iii. of Hawkins' *Origin of the English Drama*. The Epilogue, not printed there, is given in Collier, iii. 441.

[3] 'In such a night did Paris win his love,' &c.

[4] Cf. vol. i. p. 223.

to have been acted so often, that it became desirable to produce a novelty[1]; and the result was a comedy which, though composed in the period of Shakspere's maturity, is little in advance of the earliest efforts of English regular comedy. The lovers employ a stilted diction full of frigid classicisms, while the fun of the comic hero, Will Cricket, though not devoid of freshness, is of the very simplest nature. The Robin Goodfellow of this piece is merely a rogue who on one occasion assumes the character of a demon; and another of the personages, Fortunatus, has no connexion except in name with the hero of the popular romance and of Dekker's play.

Literary dramas.

From these works designed for the popular stage it may seem an abrupt transition to turn for a moment to the dramatic productions of two writers little in harmony with the general spirit of the later Elisabethan theatre. The plays of Daniel and Stirling belong in the main to a period lying beyond that surveyed in the present chapter; but the earliest of them were in either case composed before the death of Elisabeth; and no transposition would succeed in harmonising the dramatic works of these writers as a whole with the general character of the dramatic literature with which they were contemporary.

Samuel Daniel (1562–1619).

SAMUEL DANIEL'S (1562–1619) prose-style[2] gained him the encomiastic title of the Atticus of his day, and the merit of his *Sonnets* is borne out by the statement that they were among the favourite reading of Wordsworth. Dramatic gifts, on the other hand, he possessed in no eminent degree. The work on which he manifestly himself desired to rest his chief title to fame was the epic of *The Civil Wars between the Houses of Lancaster and York*[3]; and whatever the merits of that poem may be, his labours as

[1] See the Prologue.

[2] He wrote a *History of England from the Conquest to the end of the reign of Edward III*, and a very sensible *Defence of Rhime* against Sidney's *Art of English Poesy*. These together with his plays will be found in vol. i. of his *Poetical Works* (2 vols. 1718), with a brief memoir of the author.

[3] As to Shakspere's supposed indebtedness (in his *Richard II*) to this poem cf. vol. i. p. 387.

an epical poet were more congenial to his talents than his efforts as a dramatist. His non-dramatic lyrics are rarely if ever equalled by those in his dramas; but the latter too may claim the praise (not slight when applied to a writer of his age) of directness and simplicity of expression.

Philotas (pr. 1605).

Among Daniel's dramas, the most celebrated is the tragedy of *Philotas*, first printed in 1605, and afterwards republished by the author with an *Apology*, designed to ward off the suspicion that the action of his play was intended to be applied (as indeed most readers will hardly fail at first sight to surmise) to the history of Essex's plot[1]. If, then, the tragedy is to be regarded as purely historical, it has only its own merits to depend upon; and these seem extremely slender. The characters, Alexander and Philotas included, are shadowy; the comments interposed by the chorus of 'three Grecians and a Persian' uninteresting; and our sympathy with the hero is effectively destroyed at the close by his being made utterly to succumb to the effects of torture.

Cleopatra (pr. 1594).

Still less satisfactory is the same author's *Cleopatra* (printed 1594), which however (unlike *Philotas*) was never acted. The story of Antony and Cleopatra seems about this period greatly to have exercised the wits of contemporary writers; besides Brandon's *Virtuous Octavia*, a tragedy of *Antony* was produced by the Countess of Pembroke[2]; and to her Daniel, being warmly attached to her house, and as it would seem deeply indebted to it for patronage and encouragement, dedicated his tragedy, in terms of humble self-depreciation[3]. It is only remarkable as an endeavour to keep alive in unsympathising times the kind of drama which closely adheres to the rules of the ancient theatre; Choruses follow each act, and nothing in the way of action is allowed to take place on the stage, Cleopatra's death itself being narrated by one of the most

[1] The author's word must be accepted, as Addison's must in his account of the history of his *Cato*.

[2] Cf. vol. i. p. 427.

[3] The modesty of Daniel is very pleasingly manifested in several passages of his poetry, which I have no room for quoting.

long-winded *Nuntii* of either the ancient or the modern drama. But I can recognise no epic power in this or any other narrative portions of the tragedy; while in form the work is far from perfect. Daniel, the apologist of rhyme, uses it with the utmost abundance in his plays, and is specially addicted to quatrains; but it would be difficult to point to instances of worse rhymes than those which he permits himself[1].

Pastoral dramas.

Upon the whole, Daniel seems to me to have succeeded best as a dramatist in efforts beyond the range of tragedy proper. The simplicity which is justly commended in his prose, and which was characteristic of his lyrical poetry, is also to be noted as a merit in the diction of his 'Pastoral Tragi-Comedies' of *The Queen's Arcadia* (presented before Queen Anne at Christ Church, Oxford, in the year 1605) and *Hymen's Triumph* (acted at Court 1614). The latter has an interesting plot, which not a little resembles that of Shakspere's *Twelfth Night*, and there is some genuine pathos in the situations as well as in the diction of Silvia, the Viola of this pastoral[2]. *The Queen's Arcadia* is more ambitious in scope, being a dramatic story of the ill wrought in Arcadia by the guile of two representatives of false civilisation, Techne and Colax. Such types were well adapted to the age in which the play was performed; and King James's Court and capital only too faithfully reproduced the poet's picture of a demoralised Arcadia[3]. Secondary agents of corruption are introduced in the persons of a quack doctor and a pettifogger, and of a religious charlatan

[1] Let one specimen suffice (from act iii. sc. 2):

> 'Love! alas no, it was th' innate Hatred
> That thou and thine hast ever borne our People
> That made thee seek all Means to have us scattered,
> To disunite our Strength, and make us feeble.'

[2] See especially act i. sc. 2; act ii. sc. 4; and the best scene of the play, act iv. sc. 3. The situation of the opening resembles that of Ben Jonson's *Sad Shepherd*. As to this production, cf. Nichols' *Progresses, &c. of James I*, ii. 749, and Collier, i. 383. Daniel seems to be alluded to as 'the learned historiographer' who wrote 'Hymen's holidays' in Tailor's *The Hog hath lost his Pearl* (1613).

[3] The prefatory *Epistle* very pleasingly accounts for the form which the author has chosen for his moral lesson.

called Pistophoenax. If King James witnessed the tragi-comedy, it was not by chance that an allusion was introduced to one of the pernicious novelties brought into Arcadia by the destroyers of its primitive happiness[1].

In addition to these 'tragi-comedies,' Daniel produced a mask, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604), of no particular interest[2], and another, *Tethys' Festival* (1611), of which he speaks himself with the utmost modesty[3].

William Alexander, Earl of Stirling (1580–1640).

Even more foreign to the atmosphere of the popular stage are the dramatic works of William Alexander, afterwards Viscount and then Earl of Stirling or Sterline, in addition to other titles (1580–1640). The unpopularity which Stirling in the latter part of his life experienced as a statesman has hardly found a compensation in his literary reputation[4]. Here we are however concerned neither with his Nova Scotia 'kingdom' (finally sold by him for a round sum), nor with his unfortunate though patented version of the *Psalmes of David*. When he composed the four dramas

[1] 'a certain Herb wrapt up in Rolls
From th' island of *Nicosia*, where it grows:
Infus'd I think in some pestiferous Juice,
(Produc'd in that contagious burning Clime,
Contrarious to our Nature, and our Spirits)
Or else steep'd in the fuming Sop itself
Doth yield, t' enforce th' infecting Power thereof,
And this in Powder made, and fir'd, he sucks
Out of a little hollow Instrument
Of calcinated Clay, the Smoke thereof:
Which either he conveys out of his Nose
Or down into his Stomach with a Whiff.'

'Our holly hearbe nicotion' was perhaps first noticed on the stage in Lyly's *Woman in the Moon* (act iii. sc. 1); but no dramatist deserves quoting on the subject by the side of Ben Jonson. Shakspere, by the bye, never mentions tobacco; a circumstance deserving to be weighed by any one inclined to attribute his works to the inspiration of Sir Walter Ralegh.

[2] Cf. Nichols, *u. s.*, i. 305; Collier, i. 362.

[3] Nichols, ii. 346; Collier, i. 375.

[4] Mr. Masson in his *Drummond of Hawthornden*, p. 329, says of Stirling that he is 'vaguely remembered as the second-rate Scottish sycophant of an inglorious despotism and the author of a large quantity of fluent and stately English verse which no one reads.' His *Poetical Works* have, however, recently been published in a collected form, with a memoir and notes. (3 vols., Glasgow, 1870.)

which he subsequently (1607) printed in a collective volume under the title of *The Monarchicke Tragedies*, he had not long returned from his travels on the Continent; and had probably come into little contact with English men of letters or with the English stage[1].

His 'Monarchic Tragedies' (1603–1605).

The four 'Monarchicke' tragedies of this author so closely resemble one another in every point of style, that it is quite unnecessary to speak of them separately. *The Tragedy of Darius* (printed 1603), *Croesus* (1604), and *Julius Caesar* (1604[2]), are perhaps surpassed by *The Alexandraean Tragedy* (printed 1605), which its author may well term 'polytragicke,' in amplitude of design as well as in the beauty of the lyrical passages; but the literary features of all these works are identical. They treat their subjects—the fall of Darius Codomannus, the overthrow of Croesus, the contentions of the Diadochi down to the murder of the royal family of Macedon, and the death of Caesar—in dramatic form indeed, but with the breadth and discursiveness of epical narrative. The traditions of the ancient Greek drama are closely followed; and we have expository prologues (spoken by Darius, Solon, the Ghost of Alexander, and Juno, in the four tragedies respectively), dialogues mainly composed of long speeches, broken by occasional stichomythia, and a Chorus interposing reflexions in a lyrical form at the several stages of the action. The deaths are narrated by messengers or other persons[3], that of Darius twice over, that of Caesar after the debate ensuing in the Senate upon his assassination has already been held. The chief literary beauties of these plays are to be sought in their lyrical passages, which however are unequal in excellence, and weary by the sameness of their themes[4].

[1] He seems however at some time to have become acquainted with Alleyn, whom he addresses in a poem eulogising the foundation of Dulwich College.

[2] So Craik and the *Biographia Dramatica*. According to the Glasgow edition (which professes to give a complete list) there is no edition of *Caesar* known before its appearance in the collective volume of 1607.

[3] In *Croesus* however (iv. 1) Adrastus seems to kill himself on the stage.

[4] Among the finer of the Choruses may be cited those following act ii. of *Darius*, act iii. of *Croesus*, and (more especially) that after act iii. of *The Alexandraean Tragedy*. The Chorus closing act iii. of *Julius Caesar* is curious

The cadence of the quatrains composing the dialogue is frequently pleasing, and its turns are often felicitous; but the dialogue itself is intolerably prolix[1], and marred by affectations of style[2] as well as by involutions of construction and occasional lapses into baldness of expression. The aid of alliteration is largely resorted to. Elevated in tone and, notwithstanding their proneness to commonplace, by no means devoid of signs of an observing and polished intellect, these tragedies will give a certain degree of pleasure to the literary student, for whom alone they can have been intended[3].

Masks and entertainments of this period.

Apart from works designed wholly or partly for the closet, it is well known that the popular stage by no means absorbed the activity of our dramatists during the reign of Queen Elisabeth. In its closing as well as its earlier years not only were plays performed at Court, in the houses of the nobility, in the Inns of Court and at the Universities, but entertainments with more or less of a dramatic element in them were here and elsewhere presented on various occasions. The mask was a species more systematically developed and more assiduously cultivated in the succeeding reign; of the City pageants the form was, as became the sphere of their popularity, less susceptible of change. It would be beyond my purpose to collect in

for its partial attempt to substitute consonance for rhymes (*receive—conceive; intent—content; repell—compell; acquir'd—requir'd, &c.*).

[1] The ghost of Alexander is surely the most loquacious of all the unquiet spirits who have ever haunted the drama.

[2] Such conceits are frequent as those in which Caesar speaks of himself as having seemed 'uncivil in the civil wars,' or Brutus declares 'his soil' to be dearer to him than 'his soul.' Even puns occasionally occur.

[3] There are no parallelisms between Shakspere's and Stirling's plays on the subject of *Julius Caesar* of a nature to establish any connexion between them, except in so far as both authors drew from the same source. Malone traced a resemblance to a passage in *The Tempest* ('The cloud-capp'd towers' &c.) in one in *Darius* (iv. 3; removed in the edition of 1637); but the similarity, though certainly striking, must be the result of accident. See Craik's *The English of Shakespeare*, p. 46; and cf. *ante*, vol. i. p. 424. There is another passage in the same play (concluding Chorus) which might be thought to have been suggested by one in *Henry IV*; but any suspicion of plagiarism would here be equally futile.—Stirling must have been a good scholar after his kind; but he has odd notions of quantity (Darĭus, Eumēnes, Nicănor).

this place the scattered remains of compositions ephemeral in purpose and rarely worthy of notice from a literary point of view. With the account—from a Cambridge pen—of the entertainments presented to the Queen at Oxford in 1592[1] may be compared the record of the festive exertions made, after a long abstinence from such amusements, by the members of Gray's Inn in 1594[2]. The masks attributed to the experienced hand of George Ferrers, 'sometime Lord of Misrule in the Court[3],' belong to the year 1592; and a mighty, if not less officious, brain repeatedly condescended to the invention of similar devices. In 1592 or 1593 Francis Bacon enjoyed the honour of personally entertaining the Queen at Twickenham Park, where he presented her with a Sonnet in honour of the Earl of Essex[4]. To the year 1592 are probably also to be ascribed certain speeches composed by Bacon in honour of some festive occasion at Court—very possibly for a device presented on the Queen's day by the same nobleman[5]. In 1594 he contributed the addresses of the six councillors to the 'Prince of Purpoole,' in the Gray's Inn revels just noted[6]. In 1595 he drew up the speeches of the device exhibited by the same nobleman before the Queen, on the anniversary of her accession[7]. But it is known how dark a shadow was to succeed the reconciliation which this last entertainment was probably intended to celebrate. Restless as ever, the Queen continued her progresses almost to the end; and but a few months intervened between her famous visit to Harefield Place[8] and her last pageant—of which Westminster Abbey was the goal.

Compositions of this description by Bacon (1592–1595).

[1] Nichols' *Progresses &c. of Queen Elizabeth*, iii. 149.

[2] The so-called *Gesta Grayorum*. See *ib.* p. 262.

[3] *Ib.* p. 195.

[4] *Ib.* p. 191.

[5] Printed under the title of *A Conference of Pleasure* by Mr. Spedding (1870), whose Introduction states the nature of the evidence on the subject.

[6] Nichols, *u. s.*; and cf. Spedding's *Works of Bacon*, viii. 325, *seqq.*

[7] Nichols, p. 371; and cf. Spedding's *Works of Bacon*, viii. 374–386, where the text, being taken from another MS., slightly differs. Mr. Spedding observes that 'though there can be no reasonable doubt that these speeches were written by Bacon, it is he believes by mere accident that they pass as his.' As to the question of the authorship of the *Device of the Indian Prince*, which has been attributed to Bacon, see *ib.* pp. 386, *seqq.*

[8] See the entertainments in Nichols, iii. 586.

Character of the later Elisabethan entertainments.

The steady growth of the popular drama seems to have tended to narrow rather than widen the scope of this species of entertainments in the latter years of Queen Elisabeth. They were very soon to attain to a more settled form, in which they were to furnish peculiar opportunities to poetic genius as well as to inventive skill; but they had already dissociated themselves from the drama proper, with which they had formerly at times been brought into combination[1]. The drama might make use of the mask in the contrivance of its plots; but poetical or rhetorical addresses and dialogue, spoken by suitable characters in suitable apparel, appear to have constituted the substance of most of the later Elisabethan royal and civic entertainments.

The Academical Drama.

But neither the Inns of Court nor the Universities were contented with such meagre fare. In the former, as has been seen, the regular drama had long found occasional welcome. At Oxford and Cambridge (at all times quite as keenly interested in the outside world as that world is in them) it was only natural that a desire should be felt to share in those dramatic enjoyments for which neither an Oration in the Greek Tongue nor even a Disputation in Philosophy could furnish a perfect substitute[2]. The next

[1] So one may conclude from the curious production called *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* (represented before the Queen between Christmas 1581 and February 1582; and printed in 1589. See Dodsley's *Old Plays* (new edition), vol. vi). It begins with a contention between Venus and Fortune as to their relative power, which they proceed to illustrate by a series of 'shows,' introducing Troilus and Cressida, Alexander the Great, Queen Dido, &c. With the second act begins a real dramatic action, concerned with the troubled course of the true loves of two human personages. This piece, which is in rhyme and for the most part very rude in form, is noteworthy as showing what unpolished stuff could satisfy the ears of Queen and Court, at a time when *Euphues* had already established a canon of elegant diction.

[2] Both these entertainments were offered to the Queen at Oxford in 1592; the answerer in the Disputation being however soon 'cut off by the Proctors.' Two comedies were acted on two successive nights called respectively *Bellum Grammaticale* and *Rivales*—doubtless in Latin.—It is by the bye amusing to note the condescending way in which University plays are referred to by Ford in his *Lover's Melancholy* (iii. 3 *ad in.*), the earliest of his own dramatic works.

reign will supply some instances of the kind of drama which was cherished by College audiences; but already from the last years of Elisabeth there remains to us an example of an academical play from either University. That which dates from Cambridge is one of the most curious relics of the dramatic literature of this period.

The Return from Parnassus (by 1603).

The Returne from Pernassus, or The Scourge of Simony[1], to which reference has repeatedly been made in the course of the foregoing pages, was printed in 1606, but must have been written before the death of Queen Elisabeth (for the 'queen's law' is spoken of, iv. 1). It is interesting for more than one reason. Publicly acted, as the title-page states, by the students of St. John's College, Cambridge, it was designed as 'a Christenmas toy' for the diversion of an academical audience; and the diction as well as the action of the piece is redolent of the air of the University[2]. Full of allusions to the literary as well as the social life with which the Universities came into contact, it is at the same time one of the most curious illustrations not only of what Elisabethan Cambridge was, but of the way in which her sons looked upon those phases of society outside which had special interest for them.

It would seem from the Prologue as if the author of this strange play had previously written two pieces showing forth the 'pilgrimage' of scholars on 'Parnassus hill,' and their 'return.' In other words, he had already depicted the efforts of men trained in the University to succeed in the world of letters beyond its walls, and the failure of the attempt. He now presents

> 'the scholars' progress in their misery.'

Philomusus and his companion Studioso return from their fruitless travels in foreign lands to England, where they seek to make a living by their wits. They converse

[1] Printed in Hawkins' *Origin of the English Drama*, and in vol. i. of the *Ancient British Drama;* and to be printed in the new edition of Dodsley.

[2] I will only quote the following sketch of the typical 'reading man,' given by the Page of the typical non-reading man: 'A mere scholar is a creature that can strike fire in the morning at his tinder-box, put on a pair of lined slippers, sit rheuming till dinner, and then go to his meat when the bell rings.' (ii. 6.)

throughout the play in a partly heroic, partly mock-heroic style, imitative of the academical poetry of the age, of which some of Spenser's smaller poems furnish the best-known examples. They try their fortune, first as a physician and his man; finally as fiddlers—*i. e.* wandering musicians and actors—but without success. In the end they abandon further endeavours, and resolve to become simple shepherds, spending their days 'in fearless merriment' among woods and rocks which may prove kinder than men.

By way of contrast to these unfortunate aspirants after fame and success, Ingenioso, likewise a Cambridge scholar, is ambitious to rival Juvenal as a satirical writer. He is sickened with the wretched pamphlets of would-be satirists, 'plain meteors, bred of the exhalation of tobacco, and the vapours of a moist pot, that soar up into the open air, whenas sounder wit keeps below.' After exerting himself in accordance with his gifts throughout the play, with the aid of two helpmates called Phantasma and Furor Poeticus, Ingenioso too finds the land barren; and at the close retires with his companions to the Isle of Dogs, the true home of satire, 'there where the blatant beast doth rule and reign, renting the credit of whom it please.'

As a thread of action to hold together the various humours which he exhibits, the author introduces an illustration of a University grievance of a more practical character, which gives its second title to the play. A country-gentleman better provided with acres than with manners has an empty-headed son, Amoretto, who has been brought up at the University ('a spruce gartered youth of our college a while ago'), but who has finished his academical career without adding any solid learning to his tastes for hunting, hawking, and love-making. The mathematics, he complains, have spoiled his 'brain in making a verse;' and his acquaintance with the tongues is but superficial[1]. A humbler personage named Academico, described by

[1] 'Sirrha, boy, remember me when I come in Paul's churchyard to buy a Ronsard, and Dubartas in French, and Aretine in Italian, and our hardest writers in Spanish, they will sharpen my wits gallantly; I do relish these tongues in some sort.'

the other as 'a scurvy mere Cambridge scholar,' whom when he was in Cambridge, and 'lay in a trundlebed under his tutor,' he sometimes generously invited to his chamber ('to the canvassing of a turkey-pie, or a piece of venison which my lady grand-mother sent me'), is very desirous of a living in the gift of Amoretto's father[1]. But Amoretto has for a bribe promised to secure it to Immerito, an ignorant fellow devoid of University training, the son of a countryman, Stercutio. Money wins the day; and after Immerito has undergone an examination in the several branches of learning at the hands of the patron himself[2] he is duly appointed, on condition that he will abstain from controversies, not gird at men of worship, use himself discreetly, and not speak when any man or woman coughs. The whole of this caustic attack on the simoniacal bestowal of livings on ignorant *non-University* men is executed with remarkable comic power, and was doubtless most acceptable at St. John's. A very good character is the patron's legal man of business, the Recorder, who hates the forward wit of 'puny boys' from the Universities, ready to start up,

'And make a theme against common lawyers;'

and is therefore quite at one with his employer, who thinks it 'a shame indeed there should be any such privilege' as the writing of epigrams 'for proud beggars, as Cambridge and Oxford men are.'

It would be entertaining to dwell at greater length on the illustrations of University manners and customs, and of University wit, furnished by this unique comedy; but I must content myself with once more reminding the reader of the interesting criticisms which it furnishes of several of the dramatists who have been discussed in the present and earlier chapters. These criticisms occur in the second

[1] He expresses his wishes in a series of execrable hexameters, on the last words of which an Echo mockingly puns:

'Fain would I have a living, if I could tell how to come by it.'
Echo. 'Buy it,' &c.

[2] This *vivâ voce* (iii. 1) is worthy of a place by the side of that of Candidatus Jobs in *The Jobsiad.*

scene of the play[1]. In a subsequent scene (iv. 3), the two actors Burbadge and Kempe are introduced, as the instructors of the unfortunate Philomusus in their art; and it is interesting to find (v. 1) the prosperity of actors described with bitter jealousy by the representative of academical failure. The actor Kempe says—with some truth—that 'our fellow Shakespeare, aye, and Ben Jonson too,' puts down all the University play-writers, who 'smell too much of that writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphosis.' But of the author of *The Returne from Pernassus* it may be averred that had he cared to court the applause of a London instead of a Cambridge audience, his wit and humour would have made him a dangerous rival to many of the dramatists whom he criticises with so much force.

Anthony Brewer's ?) Li gua (by 1603).

By the side of this curious comedy may be mentioned another academical piece of about the same date. *Lingua, or The Combat of the Tongue and the Five Senses for Superiority*[2], is ascribed, on extremely doubtful authority, to Anthony Brewer, of whose other works nothing certain is known, but whose 'artful pen' is mentioned by a contemporary poet with great praise. The first of the many editions of this piece was printed in 1607; but it is clear from the references to 'the queen' and 'Psyche her majesty' (iv. 7) that it was produced before Elisabeth's death. That it was written for an academical audience, is clear from the whole nature of the piece, as well as from at least one incidental allusion, which would have fallen flat before non-gremial hearers[3].

[1] Of dramatists, Lodge, Drayton, Marston, Marlowe, Jonson, Nash, and Shakspere are mentioned; but Shakspere is only praised for his *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*. Later in the play (iv. 3), however, the opening lines of his *Richard III* are cited. *Belvidere, or The Garden of the Muses*, the book of sentences gathered from the above and other poets which occasions the criticism of Ingenioso and Judicio, and is described by the latter as 'profitable to the use of these times, to rhyme upon any occasion at a little warning,' was printed in 1600, and is noticed by Warton, *Hist. of Engl. Poetry*, sect. li.

[2] Printed in Dodsley's *Old Plays*, vol. v (1825).

[3] 'I should judge this action' (*i.e.* gesture) 'most absurd, unless we should come to a Comedy, as gentlemen to the Commencement, only to see men speak.' (iv. 2.) What is implied by *seeing* (not hearing) men speak at the

This comedy, which is exceedingly well written, holds the mean between a morality of the later type and a mask. It is of great length, and though it has a kind of plot and plenty of action, its attractions must have lain in the excellence of its rhetorical and descriptive passages[1]. 'All the senses,' so one of the characters summarises (iii. 2) the preceding action, 'fell out about a crown fallen from heaven, and pitch'd a field for it; but Vicegerent Common Sense hearing of it, took upon him to umpire the contention, in which regard he hath appointed them (their arms dismissed) to appear before him, charging every one to bring as it were in a show, their proper objects, that by them he may determine of their several excellences.' Memory, as 'Master Register,' is called upon to read the charges brought by the Five Senses against Lingua, who aspires to be ranked as a sixth and to obtain the prize. Memory having forgotten her spectacles ('I left them in the 349th page of Hall's Chronicles'), the indictment is read by her page Anamnestes; and after a long disputation containing much well-written rhetoric conducted by the Senses and their assistants—thus Auditus is accompanied by Tragedus and Comedus, and Olfactus by Tobacco, who talks in an Indian tongue as intelligible as the Carthaginian of the *Poenulus*, and whose virtues are summarised by his master in a passage of true eloquence[2]—Communis Sensus not unwittily decides the issue. Lingua is judged to 'be no Sense simply: only thus much we from henceforth pronounce, that all women for your sake shall have six Senses, that is, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and the last and feminine sense, the sense of speaking.' This concludes the real plot of the

Commencement will require no explanation for those acquainted with the humours of the Sheldonian Theatre or of the Senate-House.

[1] Attention should be directed to Anamnestes' speech on the difference between Comedy and Tragedy, and the hints which follow on the old and new style of actors' delivery (iv. 2).

[2] 'Genius of all swaggerers, profess'd enemy to physicians, sweet ointment for sour teeth, firm knot of good fellowship, adamant of company, swift wind to spread the wings of time, *hated of none but those that know him not, and of so great deserts, that whoso is acquainted with him can hardly forsake him.*' (iv. 5.) The pathos of this eulogium is only excelled by that of Charles Lamb's *A Farewell to Tobacco.*

play; the fifth act being occupied with the evil results consequent upon all the Senses attending a banquet given by Gustus.

Such is the substance of an exceedingly well written academical entertainment, the enduring popularity of which is attested by its numerous editions. A legend which it is unnecessary to examine relates that the part of Tactus (Touch) in this comedy was taken by 'the late Usurper Cromwell,' and that the mock contention for the crown swelled his ambition so high 'that afterwards he contended for it in earnest [1].'

[1] Related by Wriothesley, quoted in Dodsley. This would assign a Cambridge origin to the play (Cromwell was admitted there in 1616); and this comic story about the Usurper should not have escaped the notice of the tragic poet who has recently made him disreputable on the English stage.

CHAPTER VII.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER[1].

Beaumont and Fletcher.

AMONG the dramatic contemporaries and successors of Shakspere there are only three to whom posterity has at any time been willing to allow honours equal to his. In the Argo of the Elisabethan drama—as it presents itself even now to popular imagination — Shakspere's is the commanding figure. Next to him sit the twin literary heroes, Beaumont and Fletcher, vaguely regarded as inseparable in their achievements. The Herculean form of Jonson has a more disputed place among the princes; and the rest are but dimly distinguished.

Variations of their fame.

The popularity of Beaumont and Fletcher has not however wholly withstood the test of time. In their own day there is every reason to believe that it surpassed that of Shakspere. It remained at its height till the stage was at last overwhelmed by the civil troubles; and even during the period of the suppression of the theatres it was after a fashion kept alive by a large number of scenes from their plays being performed as 'drolls' 'at fairs, in

[1] The best edition of the works of Beaumont and Fletcher—and indeed a model edition of its kind, both for what it contains and for what it omits—is that of Dyce (in 11 vols., with Notes and a Biographical Memoir, 1846). It has so entirely superseded its predecessors that it is unnecessary to refer to them individually; in Darley's in 2 vols. (new edition, 1856) the text is printed from Weber's edition (1812). For critical observations I have also referred to Mr. Donne's delightful essay on *Beaumont and Fletcher*, reprinted in his *Essays on the Drama;* to Coleridge's *Literary Remains* (vol. ii), which contain some most striking though disjointed observations on these poets; to Hazlitt's *Lectures*, by no means satisfactory, though always self-sufficient; to Schlegel's *Lectures;* and to the brief notes of Rapp in his *Englisches Theater*. Among earlier criticisms, those of Dryden should not be lost sight of.

halls and taverns, on mountebanks' stages[1].' When, shortly before the execution of King Charles I, a few players surreptitiously acted a few plays at the Cock-pit, it was a tragedy of Fletcher's in the midst of which they were suddenly arrested by the hand of authority[2]. When better days had arrived for the afflicted stage, Beaumont and Fletcher resumed their prerogative as favourite authors; and among the plays acted by Rhodes' company (of which Betterton was the star) immediately after the Restoration are several of those loosely ascribed to both these dramatists[3]. During the whole of the Restoration period their plays remained pre-eminently popular; the diary of Pepys records frequent performances of them; and they were freely altered and adapted, with or without acknowledgment, by the dramatists of the period. Beaumont and Fletcher shared with Shakspere the discriminating praises of Dryden[4] and the cavils of Rymer. But with the beginnings of modern criticism their fame declined. It is not worth while to pursue the gradations by which it passed from popularity to esteem. An eighteenth-century writer expresses in appropriate words the judgment which a popular and instructed opinion alike formed of

> 'Beaumont and Fletcher! those twin *stars* that run
> Their glorious course round Shakespeare's golden *sun*;'

and the stage has in the end proved an even less kindly stepmother to them than literary criticism. They, who in their day had at times proclaimed themselves reformers of the theatre from the ribaldry and grossness which disfigured it, came to be regarded as typically intolerable by reason of an impurity of which in truth they cannot be acquitted. Then, on the rise of a broader kind of criticism,

[1] Kirkman's *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport* (1672), from the title-page of which the above expressions are taken, is a collection of the 'drolls' in question. It will be observed that several of Fletcher's plays were thus partially kept before the public, while only one of these pieces is taken from Shakspere (*The Gravemakers*, from *Hamlet*) and one from Ben Jonson (*The Imperick*, from *The Alchemist*).

[2] *The Bloody Brother*. See Dyce, i. lxxviii, from Wright's *Historia Histrionica*.

[3] Geneste, i. 31.

[4] See his Essays *Of Dramatic Poesy* and on *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*.

Schlegel (though without any very extensive knowledge of their works) pronounced them in want of that earnestness of mind and truest artistic insight which he had so fully established as characterising Shakspere; and Coleridge contributed some powerful illustrations of the same text. Though Charles Lamb did much to preserve them from neglect, and though an edition (by Weber), which Dyce pronounces the best which had yet appeared, was published in 1812, yet it was not till Dyce's own edition saw the light that a revival of their fame may be said to have begun. The means are now at hand for re-considering a verdict often hastily pronounced, and for attempting to arrive at a definitive conclusion as to the merits of two writers — if I may for the moment speak of them conjointly—who in attractiveness must be allowed to surpass all and every one of Shakspere's fellow-dramatists.

A brief sketch of their lives may precede a necessary endeavour, before judging of their plays, to distinguish between those which are to be ascribed to them conjointly, and those which belong to the one or the other of the pair alone.

Life of John Fletcher (1579–1625).

Of the two JOHN FLETCHER was the elder. He was a younger son of a large family. His father, Richard Fletcher, was successively President of Bene't (now Corpus Christi) College, Cambridge; minister of Rye in Sussex—where his son John was born in December, 1579; Dean of Peterborough—in which capacity he attended Mary Queen of Scots at Fotheringay Castle, and endeavoured to persuade her to recant the Catholic faith; Bishop of Bristol; and Bishop of London, from which office he was temporarily suspended, having incurred the Queen's displeasure by contracting a second marriage. Shortly after his restoration he died[1] (1596), leaving behind him a numerous family and a heavy debt.

Of Fletcher's early life very little has been ascertained. As a younger son he would in any case have had to fight

[1] Of grief, according to Fuller; 'nicosia immodice hausta,' according to Camden.

the battle of life with his own wits[1]; but from his father, he probably inherited nothing but an equal half of his books[2], which may perhaps be regarded as evidence of his early literary tastes. These tastes themselves were however to some degree inherited; for his father was a man of learning; his paternal uncle Giles was a writer of travels and a Latin poet; and his cousins Phineas and Giles hold conspicuous places of their own in the records of English literature[3]. It may be assumed as certain that John Fletcher was the youth of his name who, in 1591, was admitted pensioner at Bene't College, and in 1593 became a bible-clerk there.

Nothing is known of his career from this point to that at which he is found connected with the London stage. There is no reason to fix this earlier than 1607, in which year he wrote some commendatory lines on Jonson's *Volpone*, and brought out (if not already in 1606) his comedy of *The Woman-Hater*, probably—though there is no clear evidence on the subject—already in co-operation with Beaumont. *Thierry and Theodoret* seems likewise to have been an early work written by the friends; but at all events, if the tradition handed down by Dryden may be trusted, it was in 1608 or 1609 that they made their first *successful* joint essay in *Philaster*. Of the nature of the friendship between the pair, and of their probable relative share in the productions ascribed to them jointly, I will speak below. After Beaumont's death in 1616, Fletcher continued to write for the stage; and was associated as a playwright with other dramatists—with Massinger (before

[1] It is curious how frequently in his plays Fletcher recurs to the topic of the hard lot of younger sons. See *The Honest Man's Fortune* (iii. 2); *The Queen of Corinth* (i. 2); *The Spanish Curate* (i. 1). Perhaps however he may be said to make the *amende honorable* in *The Elder Brother*.

[2] Mr. Darley thought it improbable that Bishop Fletcher, who remembered a college, would have forgotten his son in his will. But, as Mr. Donne humorously observes, 'Bishop Fletcher's bequests resembled Diego's in his son's *Spanish Curate*. His executors must have asked: "Where shall we find those sums?"'

[3] Phineas Fletcher, the author of the extraordinary effort of ingenuity called *The Purple Island*, also produced one ('piscatory') drama called *Sicelides* (printed 1631).

as well as after Beaumont's death) certainly, and probably also with William Rowley[1] and others. His early association with Shakspere is not proved by any satisfactory external evidence[2]. By Jonson he was both 'loved' and praised[3]; and Massinger, who was afterwards buried by his side, is spoken of as his intimate friend in an *Epitaph* on both[4]. His popularity with his brother-playwrights, his wit in conversation, his modesty, his hatred of flattering the public by 'crouching' prologues[5], and his honest love of well-earned applause, are qualities attested by satisfactory evidence. By no means uniformly successful as a dramatist[6], it would seem that Fletcher never lost his temper or his time in angry recrimination, and that he reached the end of his laborious career without, so far as we know, having made an enemy. I have been much struck by the passages in his works where he recurs to a conception which undoubtedly had a very vital significance for him—that of a gentleman[7]. Such then we may assume him to have been not by birth and breeding only, but in conduct. For the rest, his friendships and his

[1] See however below as to *The History of Cardenio.*

[2] Cf. vol. i. p. 466.

[3] See *Conversations with Drummond;* and Brome says that Jonson was proud to call Fletcher 'son,' and

'Swore he had outdone
His very self.'

Cf. also Jonson's commendatory verses on *The Faithful Shepherdess.*

[4] By Sir Aston Cokain, quoted in Dyce, i. lxxii.

[5] See the Prologue written for a revival of *The Nice Valour.*

[6] *The Faithful Shepherdess* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* were damned by the audience, and *The Coxcomb* (on account of its length) by part of it; and see Brome's Dedication of *Monsieur Thomas*, where it is stated that 'the dull apprehensions of former times gave but slender allowance to many' of Fletcher's plays. (Dyce, i. lxxiii.)

[7] See, above all, the fine passage in *The Nice Valour* (v. 3):

'*Duke.* . . . . .
I cannot make you gentlemen; that's a work
Rais'd from your own deservings; merit, manners,
And in-born virtue does it; let your own goodness
Make you so great, my power shall make you greater;
And more to encourage you, this I add agen,
There 's many grooms now exact gentlemen.'

The character of Lysander in *The Lover's Progress* is a really fine gentleman, every inch of him.

literary labours seem to have sufficed him for happiness,—there is no proof that he was ever married. In August, 1625, he died, a victim of the plague, and was buried at St. Saviour's, Southwark. His grave is unknown.

Life of Francis Beaumont (1586 or earlier–1616).

Of the life of FRANCIS BEAUMONT we possess rather more particulars than of that of his friend. He was born at Grace-Dieu in Leicestershire, the seat of his ancestors, in 1586, or a year or two earlier. His family was ancient and his father was a Justice of the Common Pleas. Beaumont's family too seems to have been distinguished by literary tastes; his elder brother, John, besides having his 'honoured poems' commended as those of an 'honoured friend' by Ben Jonson, is commemorated as a brother-poet together with the dramatist by Drayton, nor was the vein exhausted in this generation [1]. Francis Beaumont, after a short residence at Broadgates Hall, Oxford, was entered of the Inner Temple in 1600, a society with which he preserved his connexion; for at a later date (1613) he was chosen to write the *Mask of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn* for the festivities on the marriage of the Princess Elisabeth [2]. He seems however soon to have turned his attention from law to literature; and in 1602 published, in accordance with the tastes of the age, a version of a licentious Ovidian tale [3]. As a lover of literature he was inevitably brought into

[1] John's son and namesake was one of the Cambridge men who contributed to the collection of verses in memory of Edward King, of which Milton's *Lycidas* formed part. Dyce mentions other members of the family who wrote poetry; among them Francis Beaumont, Fellow of Peterhouse, who belonged to the group of which Crashaw was a member, and like him became a convert to the Church of Rome; and Dr. Joseph Beaumont, a collateral relation, who died as Master of the same College in 1699.

[2] As it seems unnecessary again to refer to this mask (the value of which lies chiefly in the fact that it furnishes an independent example of Beaumont's versification), it will suffice to observe that it was a companion production to Chapman's *Mask of the Middle-Temple and Lincoln's Inn*, written for the same occasion (cf. *ante*, p. 29). Its merits are not beyond those of the average of such productions; the pleasing device of the marriage between the Thames and the Rhine, which suggests Spenserian parallels, is but slightly referred to in the dialogue, recited by Mercury and Iris.

[3] Beaumont's authorship of *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* has however been doubted by Collier.

contact with Ben Jonson, to whom he addressed more than one commendatory poem[1], and the memories of whose favourite haunt he celebrated in a well-known tribute[2]. Rumour afterwards attributed to Beaumont the honourable position of accepted counsellor to Ben Jonson himself in the composition and construction of his plays[3]; it is certain that their intimacy was great, and their respect for one another equally so[4].

Beaumont's poems—otherwise uninteresting, except as furnishing in at least one instance (*An Elegy on the Lady Markham*) an early example of the worst extravagances of the Fantastic School—show him to have continued to mix in the society of which he was by birth a member. His friendship with Jonson, and the intimacy with Fletcher to which it may have led, brought him into connexion with the stage, for which he is not known to have written anything before the joint composition of *Philaster*. Choice rather than necessity must have induced Beaumont to adopt the habits of life with which tradition has credited (and also discredited) the friendship of the pair; for Beaumont (in 1606) inherited part of his eldest brother's property. In 1613 he married a lady of birth and fortune (Ursula, daughter and co-heir of Henry Isley, of Sundridge in Kent); but he died only a few years afterwards, on March 6th, 1616. More than one literary friend—among whom Mr. Dyce has naturally sought to include Fletcher[5]—mourned the premature loss of one who seems to have

[1] On the occasion of the production of *The Fox* (1607), *The Silent Woman* (1609), and *Catiline* (1611), respectively.

[2] *Master Francis Beaumont's Letter to Ben Jonson*, which contains the famous passage:

'What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid!' &c.

[3] See the well-known passage in Dryden's *On Dramatic Poesy*: 'Beaumont was so accurate a judge of plays, that Ben Jonson, while he lived, submitted all his writings to his censure, and 'tis thought, used his judgment in correcting, if not contriving, all his plots.'

[4] See Ben Jonson's charming lines *To Francis Beaumont*, in answer to the *Letter*.

[5] See the *Sonnet* printed by Dyce, i. liii, which may well be supposed to have been written in memory of one to whose loss its pathetic expressions are so signally appropriate:

His personal reputation.

been universally beloved. Of Beaumont's character it is for obvious reasons less easy to form a definite conception than of his friend's. But though a genuine popularity naturally attaches to the young man of rank and fortune moving on terms of friendly equality among those with whom the pursuit of an art is a question of bread as well as of honour[1],—though a halo naturally surrounds the memory of one who dies young in the midst of his fame,—and though, lastly, it is probable that on surviving Beaumont Fletcher assiduously proclaimed his friend's merits to a willing audience,—yet there is no reason to undervalue the warm consent with which his contemporaries seem to have regretted one 'in the foremost rank of the rar'st Wits' of his age. Tradition has handed down the 'judiciousness' of Beaumont as his most memorable characteristic in his relations to two men whose equal we cannot deem him to have been in genius—Ben Jonson and Fletcher. And at whatever judgment we may arrive with regard to his claim to the laurels of which he is popularly allowed an equal share, we may readily believe him to have been worthy of the esteem with which he seems to have been regarded by his contemporaries, of the friendship with which he was honoured by Ben Jonson, and of the devotion which we cannot doubt was entertained towards him by Fletcher.

Beaumont and Fletcher's friendship and literary partnership.

Of the personal relations between Beaumont and Fletcher little is known beyond traditions in which, for their own sakes, it is undesirable to place too literal a trust. Brought together by common tastes, perhaps by a pursuit already essayed by either on his own account, perhaps by the intervention of Ben Jonson, they are not known with certainty

> 'Oh, noble youth, to thy ne'er-dying name,
> Oh, happy youth, to thy still-growing fame,
> To thy long peace in earth, this sacred knell
> Our lost loves ring—farewell, farewell, farewell!'

[1] To such even a little vanity is readily forgiven; and probably Jonson, when he told Drummond 'that Francis Beaumont loved too much himself and his own verses,' was only momentarily untrue to the spirit in which he seems habitually to have regarded him.

to have begun the joint production of plays earlier than with that of *Philaster* in 1608 or thereabouts, though, as already stated, Dryden observes that they had previously 'written two or three very unsuccessfully,'—which may very likely have included *The Woman-Hater*, and possibly *Thierry and Theodoret.* From this time there is every reason to believe that they continued to compose in common till Beaumont's death. It is certain that Fletcher's activity found opportunities during this period of producing plays without Beaumont's co-operation, alone or in conjunction with other authors. By Beaumont on the other hand it is quite improbable that anything dramatic was written independently of Fletcher — unless the mask mentioned above and the first two of *The Four Plays in One*, if these be by Beaumont only, be taken into account. During these common labours they are said to have been associated together in the most intimate personal intercourse. They lived together, according to a tradition handed down by Aubrey, 'on the Banke side, not far from the Play-house,' and had everything in common,—even 'the same cloaths and cloake.' If this manner of life must perforce have come to an end with Beaumont's marriage, the 'wonderfull consimility of phansy' between them doubtless survived even that period, so fatal — according to Charles Lamb—to bachelor friendships. Shirley[1] describes both, without drawing any distinction between them, as 'upon every occasion so fluent, to talk a comedy;' and it is well known how an intellectual and moral likeness may grow up between friends (or between husband and wife), however different by nature, which defies the most cunning analysis.

Yet already contemporary tradition sought to discriminate between the shares of these authors in works which have been attributed to their joint composition; and modern criticism has sought with considerable self-confidence to follow in the same direction. It therefore becomes necessary to say one word on the probable nature of their literary partnership.

[1] In the *Address to the Reader*, prefixed to the Folio of 1647.

Usage of literary partnership among Elisabethan dramatists.

The collaboration of authors is one of the most ordinary phenomena of dramatic literature—from the days when Eupolis helped (or professed to have helped) Aristophanes in his *Knights*[1] to those when Alexander Dumas the elder supplied the 'ideas' of dramas to a whole *bureau* of acolytes. The Elisabethan stage, as has been manifoldly seen, was especially familiar with the system. There is no reason to suppose Shakspere to have at times refused the assistance which he was doubtless at other times ready to bestow; Ben Jonson certainly contributed to the plays of other authors; we have noticed Chapman and Dekker, Middleton and William Rowley, and many others working in conjunction. Fletcher himself in some of his later plays certainly availed himself of such assistance. Between making 'additions' to old plays, in order to furnish Henslowe or Alleyn with a new attraction, and similarly eking out the labours of fellow-playwrights, the Elisabethan dramatists must no doubt occasionally have been as much at a loss to know to what in the works of their fellows—and in their own works—they could positively lay claim themselves, as any modern critic not gifted with a full measure of chorizontic belief in his own infallibility. Still, there must have been a consciousness of piecemeal work in such proceedings; and doubtless the managers and the dramatic authors themselves as a rule knew how much or how little constituted the several shares of the several authors.

Circumstances of the union between Beaumont and Fletcher.

Was the partnership between Beaumont and Fletcher only of this kind? In the first place, there were certainly circumstances in this case favouring the growth of a 'consimility of phansy' of a much intenser kind than that which naturally exists between men writing in the same age for the same public. They were both born in the upper ranks of society; both University-bred; and very nearly of the same age. Both were at the beginnings of their literary

[1] *κἀκείνους τοὺς ἱππέας Συνεποίησα τῷ φαλακρῷ τούτῳ κἀδωρησάμην.* Schol. Ar. *Nub.* 550; quoted by Müller-Strübing, *Aristophanis u. die historische Kritik*, p. 22.

careers brought under the influence of an important epoch in the history of our dramatic literature—that in which Shakspere had already produced the works of his maturity, and Jonson some at least of his masterpieces. Neither of them, so far as one can judge from what remains from their hands, possessed that strong originality of mind which renders its possessor sooner or later altogether independent of models. It is fair to assume that both were acquainted in some measure with the Latin, French, Spanish and Italian tongues. Such differences as certainly existed in the outward circumstances of the two friends, were hardly of a nature to be likely to reflect themselves in their productions. Fletcher was doubtless familiar, and Beaumont not, with the pressure of narrow means; and perhaps partly in consequence of this circumstance confined himself more closely than Beaumont to dramatic as the only profitable species of literary composition. There is no reason to suppose that he was like Beaumont member of an Inn of Court, or otherwise maintained his connexion with persons of high social standing. Finally Beaumont married, while Fletcher seems to have remained a bachelor; so that altogether Fletcher was established in a far more permanent way than Beaumont as a citizen of the theatrical Bohemia of the day. But these distinctions must either have been forgotten, or did not yet exist, when they worked in common. Altogether, no two men can ever have been more likely mutually to assimilate themselves than Beaumont and Fletcher. Both in the choice and in the treatment of their subjects they were likely to be thoroughly at one; and the warmth and constancy of their friendship could hardly but lead to the ready mutual deference requisite for bringing about in such joint labours a complete harmony of conception and execution.

Are their respective contributions to their joint works distinguishable?

Under these circumstances no antecedent improbability is involved in supposing Beaumont and Fletcher to have succeeded in becoming *one author*,—just as Clarangè in *The Lover's Progress* (ii. 1) says that he and his friend Lydian became 'one soldier;' and the knot of their literary

fellowship, like the knot of love between Palamon and Arcite in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (i. 3), to have been

> 'Tied, weav'd, entangled, with so true, so long,
> And with a finger of so deep a cunning,'

that it was not within the power of the most keen-sighted literary criticism to seek to disentangle it.

Such has been the opinion of some of Beaumont and Fletcher's admirers both in their own and in later days. A contemporary, in a commendatory poem of great spirit, arrives at the conclusion that they were

> 'both for both, not semi-wits:
> Each piece is wholly two, yet never splits;
> Ye are not two faculties and one soul still,
> He th' understanding, thou the quick free-will;
> But, as two voices in one song embrace,
> Fletcher's keen treble and deep Beaumont's bass.
> Two full, congenial souls; still both prevailed;
> His house and thine were quartered, not impaled[1].'

A modern critic who quotes these lines[2] regards the problem of 'the respective shares of Beaumont and Fletcher in the dramas which bear their joint names' as insoluble. Another[3] confesses that he 'cares little about knowing which plays were written by the one, which by the other, or which by both;' and it is quite obvious that he knows as little as he cares. Even the most learned and ablest of the editors of Beaumont and Fletcher refrains from any attempt to distinguish between the contributions of the two poets to the works ascribed to them conjointly.

On the other hand, the tradition, loose in itself, of Beaumont's 'judgment' having 'check'd what Fletcher writ[4]' is

[1] On the Happy Collection of Mr. Fletcher's Works. By J. Berkenhead. The same is the spirit of Jasper Maine's lines On the Works of Beaumont and Fletcher, which, he says, present 'one poet in a pair of friends.'

[2] Mr. W. B. Donne.

[3] *Edinb. Review*, April 1841, art. *Beaumont and Fletcher, and their Contemporaries.*

[4] Pope may have derived this notion from Cartwright, who says in one of his commendatory poems on Fletcher's plays:

> 'Fletcher, though some call it thy fault that wit
> So overflow'd thy scenes, that e'er 'twas fit

unsupported by any evidence; and the supposition that while Beaumont was more peculiarly under the influence of the precepts or example of Jonson, Fletcher was a 'limb of Shakspere' in any other sense than that of having come nearer to Shakspere in certain of his qualities as a dramatic poet, is equally devoid of external proof.

The evidence on this head internal only.

It seems to follow that the only possible evidence on which it is possible to base any attempt to distinguish Beaumont's individual characteristics as a dramatic poet from those of Fletcher must be internal. Could a trustworthy test separating the contributions of the one from those of the other be applied to the works attributed to their joint composition, it might be allowable to compare or contrast these contributions from other points of view. Such a test has recently been sought in their versification; and the labours of Mr. Fleay on this head are of so systematic a character as to deserve serious attention in connexion with this ancient *crux* in our literary history[1].

> To come upon the stage, Beaumont was fain
> To bid thee be more dull; that's, write again
> And bate some of thy fire; which from thee came
> In a clear, bright, full, but too large a flame;
> And, after all, (finding thy genius such
> That blunted, and allay'd, 'twas yet too much,)
> Added his sober spunge: and did contract
> Thy plenty to less wit, to make 't exact,' &c.—

though, as is clear from what follows, Cartwright did not himself consider there was any essential difference between the plays written by Fletcher conjointly with Beaumont and those written by the former alone.

[1] See Part ii. of his paper *On Metrical Tests as applied to Dramatic Poetry* in the *Transactions* of the New Shakspere Society.

Of one series of plays included among those popularly known as 'Beaumont and Fletcher's' it may be confidently asserted that they are by Fletcher only. Of another series it may be asserted with equal confidence that, whether or not they were the result of unassisted labours on his part, Beaumont had no hand in them. A fair starting-point is thus gained in a number of works from which definite conclusions may be arrived at as to the versification used by Fletcher when he wrote without conjunction with Beaumont. Unfortunately there is no play extant, if any ever existed, of which Beaumont is known on external evidence to have been the sole author.

Fletcher's versification, as will be pointed out below, has many peculiar features which, taken together, make his verse distinguishable without difficulty from that of most of his contemporary dramatists. The most notable

But no mental test seems successfully applicable.

It seems, however, unlikely that the most successful endeavour to distinguish Fletcher's from Beaumont's *hand* will also result in distinguishing the *mind* of either from that of his friend. An examination of the plays such as is

among these features is that of the frequency of double or feminine endings, in which he may be safely said to exceed any other writer of our old drama. (According to Mr. Fleay, the average of such endings in the plays as to all of which he and Mr. Dyce agree in considering Fletcher the sole author is 1777; that in the plays of Massinger, the dramatist next to Fletcher most given to the practice, 1059.) Again, in the plays known to have been written by Fletcher only, rhyme is used very sparingly, and prose is eschewed altogether.

To make use of all three of these phenomena, in seeking to distinguish between the shares of Beaumont and of Fletcher in their joint plays, appears to me a doubtful process. For I can see no reason whatever why, in plays in which in the earlier part of his career he co-operated with Beaumont, Fletcher should not—whether in deference to Beaumont's usage, or because he had not yet found a distinct practice of his own in this respect—have occasionally used rhyme (from which *The Faithful Shepherdess* proves him to have had no original aversion); or why he should not have taken his share of the prose which they may have agreed to insert. But the double-endings, particularly as used by Fletcher in combination with the practice of stopping the sense at the end of the verse, give so peculiar a cadence to the lines, and constitute a manner of versification from which when once adopted a poet is so unlikely incidentally to diverge, that their frequent employment in scenes of joint plays, and their sparse employment in other scenes, may be fairly regarded as favouring the antecedent supposition of the presence or absence of Fletcher's hand.

The conclusions at which Mr. Fleay has arrived by the application of this test therefore appear worthy of attention, while the use of rhyme or prose can hardly be viewed in a similar light. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that in any scene Fletcher may have added touches to the writing of Beaumont, or Beaumont have altered touches in the writing of Fletcher; and that the application of this test would only become really valuable, if it could be shown that the differences of versification reflected themselves in differences of a more important kind. I cannot, on the one hand, say that I have succeeded in tracing any essential difference as to treatment of subjects or conception of characters in the plays respectively ascribed to Beaumont and Fletcher jointly, or to Fletcher alone (while in the plays ascribed to Fletcher and some other assistant it is I think possible to trace by means of other tests besides those of versification the co-operation of a different writer); and, on the other hand, I remain in doubt whether in the scenes attributed by Mr. Fleay to Beaumont, and those attributed by him to Fletcher, in plays ascribed to their joint authorship, it would be possible to find demonstrable differences besides those of versification. (The consideration which I have been able to give to some instances has been too partial and cursory to admit of my speaking more positively. But see *e. g. The Maid's Tragedy*, which Mr. Fleay divides thus:

B. i. 1, 2; ii. 1; iii. 1, 2; iv. 2; v. 4.
F. ii. 2; iv. 1; v. 1, 2, 3—

thus giving Beaumont more than three-fourths of the play, with only 200

attempted in the following pages will show how characteristics which will certainly not be denied to Fletcher, such as extreme delicacy of pathos and great vivacity of humour, are shared with plays belonging to himself alone by plays in which Beaumont co-operated, and are signally perceptible in passages of those plays which on evidence of versification are attributed to him[1]. I am not aware that any of Fletcher's unassisted plays are in certain respects more devoid of 'judgment' than some of those in which Beaumont co-operated[2]; while on the other hand I doubt whether any of the joint plays surpass in cleverness of construction some in which Fletcher worked alone[3]. These points of comparison might be multiplied; but in every case it would prove difficult to establish any point in which the co-operation of Beaumont either enhanced or impeded the creative powers of Fletcher. Doubtless their joint plays contain no aberrations from a high standard of dramatic morality to the full as lamentable as some written by Fletcher only; but with some of the joint plays before him, he would be a rash judge who would conclude Beau-

double-endings, while the remainder contains 264.) Where Mr. Fleay thinks Fletcher 'traceable,' instead of actually assuming him as author, he is, I conclude, willing to allow a virtually joint composition. It is probable that many other scenes may likewise be held to have been written by both in conjunction.

It is worthy of notice that among the dramatic labours ascribed to both dramatists jointly are the *Four Plays in One*, which consist of an Induction and four short one-act plays, with regard to which it is a not improbable assumption that Beaumont and Fletcher respectively took upon themselves the sole authorship of two pieces each. On applying the tests of double-endings, rhymes and incomplete lines, Mr. Fleay has arrived at the conclusion that the former two are by Beaumont, the latter two by Fletcher. It is difficult to resist this conclusion, which if accepted furnishes a peculiarly strong aid in determining the characteristics of the style and versification of each of the two poets. But as to treatment of subjects, it would be difficult to point out in these 'Triumphs' (except the last, which on the evidence of versification is Fletcher's) anything which will not accommodate itself to a conception of Fletcher's dramatic genius derived from the evidence furnished by the works of which he is the sole author.

[1] So *e.g.* in *Philaster* and in *The Knight of Malta*. Or, again, observe the humour of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, all the prose of which Mr. Fleay attributes to Beaumont.

[2] *e.g. Thierry and Theodoret; A King and no King.*

[3] *e.g. The Custom of the Country; The Woman's Prize.*

mont to have acted in this respect as a 'check' upon his friend. It is my belief that Beaumont and Fletcher were both dramatic poets of sufficiently high ability to be able to work as equals, and to conceive in thorough harmony with one another what in certain points of form they may have to a great degree executed independently; but that neither of them was so great that a fusion of their creative powers was impossible, or so small that they intentionally avoided it.

I proceed briefly to notice (1) the plays which seem to be attributable to the joint authorship of both dramatists; (2) those which may with certainty or probability be ascribed to Fletcher only; and (3) those which are known or thought to have been written by him conjointly with some dramatist other than Beaumont. My remarks on these several groups of plays may however be appropriately preceded by a few words concerning an unassisted dramatic production of Fletcher's which occupies a place of its own among his works, and was written at an earlier period than any other play which can be confidently ascribed to him alone.

Fletcher's The Faithful Shepherdess pr. by 1610).

The Faithful Shepherdess (certainly published by the early part of the year 1610[1]) was from Fletcher's hand only[2]. Unfavourably received on its first production, it was hailed as a work of true poetic merit in several commendatory poems addressed to the author by way of consolation—among others in some characteristic verses by Ben Jonson. It was revived as a Court entertainment in 1634, with an addition by D'Avenant, and was thereupon several times acted with applause at the Blackfriars Theatre. The literary fame which it has always enjoyed is warranted by genuine merits; and a special interest attaches to this pastoral drama as having beyond all doubt suggested several of the beauties of Milton's *Comus*[3].

[1] Sir William Skipwith, one of the persons to whom it is dedicated, died in May 1610.

[2] A commendatory epistle on the play was addressed to Fletcher by Beaumont.

[3] See in particular iii. 1; a passage in which it would appear was also imitated by Browne in his *Britannia's Pastorals*, doubtless likewise known to

The Faithful Shepherdess, as its name indicates, was composed under the influence of the Italian pastoral drama, and more particularly of the *Pastor Fido* of Guarini, which has been briefly described above[1]. Of Guarini's pastoral drama it has been remarked that its title would more appropriately have been that which Fletcher actually gave to his imitation. It is however to be observed that the English *Pastorella Fida* is an imitation of the Italian play only in the sense that its general style and treatment resemble those of its Italian prototype; its plot appears to be original, nor can it be said, so far as I am aware, that any of its characters are borrowed. Cloe indeed has been thought to be modelled upon Corisca in Guarini's pastoral; but the type of the wanton shepherdess is too general a one to be necessarily traceable to a particular model. On the other hand the Satyr, though a character with this name is to be found both in the *Pastor Fido* and in *Aminta*, by Fletcher's original treatment becomes perhaps the most pleasing feature of his poem. The relation between the Satyr and Clorinda may have been to some extent suggested by one of the most famous passages in the *Faerie Qucene*. Fletcher's other debts to Spenser are of the most trifling description, and consist in the names of a few characters, and perhaps a phrase here and there, taken from *The Shepherd's Kalendar*[2].

Two dangers are involved in the view which Fletcher announces in his address *To the Reader* on the subject of pastoral poetry, viz. that it is 'a representation of shepherds and shepherdesses with their actions and passions, which must be such as may agree with their natures, at least not

Milton, and probably written after Fletcher's pastoral drama. (The First Part was published in 1616, but apparently written in part as early as 1610, certainly by 1613.)

[1] Vol. i. p. 582.

[2] A fine compliment is paid to Spenser under the name of Dorus—

'he
That was the soul and god of melody'—

in v. 5, where there is introduced into a song a pretty quotation from *The Shepherd's Kalendar*. The 'Tityrus' referred to (v. 3) seems, as Seward suggests, to be Chaucer (as in Spenser).

exceeding former fictions and vulgar traditions; they are not to be adorned with any art, but such improper[1] ones as nature is said to bestow, as singing and poetry; or such as experience may teach them, as the virtues of herbs and fountains, the ordinary course of the sun, moon, and stars, and the like.' These dangers are sameness and artificiality; neither of which Fletcher can be said to have avoided, while Jonson, who in his *Sad Shepherd* to some extent disregards the former of these limitations, has accordingly given more of variety and naturalness to his endeavour. Fletcher's intrigue—with the exception of the incidents connected with the Sacred Well—is monotonous and tame; and the characters are all unequivocally uninteresting. And the whole action is founded on the utterly unreal distinction—as here exhibited—between chaste and unchaste love, which seems a flimsy figment when compared with so deeply conceived and powerfully developed a contrast as that exhibited in Milton's *Comus*. The beauties of *The Faithful Shepherdess* are accordingly in my opinion beauties of detail; but the freshness with which the tone of the diction and the character of the imagery are sustained through nearly the whole of this pastoral merits the highest praise. There is hardly any affectation of that archaism of phraseology by which Spenser sought to give a 'Doric' hue to his principal pastoral; while there is abundant evidence of an observation of nature close enough to give a warm colouring to the poetic form. Such passages as the opening lines of act v, and the closing speeches of the Satyr, are equally natural and elegant; and while it wholly lacks the moral grandeur of *Comus*, and in dramatic vigour seems inferior to Jonson's pastoral fragment, *The Faithful Shepherdess* is, in even excellence of execution, without a rival among the few green branches put forth by that generally feeble growth, the Elisabethan pastoral drama.

Beaumont(?) and Fletcher's

The Woman-Hater (printed anonymously in 1607, as 'lately acted by the children of Paules') was in a much

[1] *i.e.* as Dyce explains, not confined to particular persons, common.

later edition (of 1648) ascribed to Fletcher only, but in one published in the following year[1] (1649) to both dramatists. In this conflict between two pieces of probably worthless evidence, the test of style and versification may be fairly applied; and notwithstanding Mr. Dyce's opinion that this comedy was 'in all probability Fletcher's unassisted composition,' I should be inclined to agree with Mr. Fleay so far as to surmise the co-operation of Beaumont. The play (contrary to Fletcher's practice in his later unassisted plays) contains a considerable amount of prose; and so much of it as is in verse has a considerable admixture of rhyme. There is indeed no reason why Fletcher should have not made an early essay after this fashion; but neither is there anything in the play to exclude the probability of Beaumont's hand having been concerned in it. Though written with much vivacity and with an ease of manner unusual among contemporary dramatists, *The Woman-Hater* cannot be ranked high as a comedy. Of the two plots interwoven in it, the one concerned with the character who gives its name to the play is unnatural; while the other, which turns on the eagerness of the 'hungry courtier' Lazarillo to partake at any risk—marriage included—of a dish of rare delicacy, is farcically absurd. The humour of this borrowed notion[2], though brought out with considerable spirit, is purely artificial.

The Woman-Hater (acted 1606–7).

As to the authorship of *The Tragedy of Thierry King of France, and his Brother Theodoret* (of which the first—anonymous—edition bears date 1621) we have precisely the same kind of evidence as in the case of *The Woman-Hater*, except that the Epilogue to the tragedy (apparently written for the first performance) speaks only of a single author (while the Prologue of the edition of 1649 of course treats the play as written by both the authors to whom the title-page attributes it). Fletcher's hand is visible in the versification; but I am not inclined on account of the occurrence of prose to exclude the supposition of

Beaumont(?) and Fletcher's Thierry and Theodoret (before 1616).

[1] With a Prologue in verse by D'Avenant.

[2] The story of Lazarillo and the umbrana's head is taken from the treatise of Paulus Jovius *On Roman Fishes.*

Beaumont's co-operation. The difficulty is increased by the strange intermixture in this tragedy of crude conceptions, less startling in an early than in a later effort, with beauties hardly surpassed in the author's finest works. Upon the whole, therefore, I should be inclined to follow Dyce in regarding Darley's view as not improbable, according to which *Thierry and Theodoret*, though 'not brought out till after Beaumont's death, may have been planned, and partly or wholly written, with his co-operation, before it.'

The plot of this tragedy has a kind of historical *substratum* in the story of the Austrasian queen Brunhild, of whom a modern historian[1] says that she 'has had partisans almost as enthusiastic as those of Mary, Queen of Scots,' but who in the play is a lascivious monster of a brutal type, such as it is difficult to suppose a trained imagination to have conceived. With the aid of a congenial trefoil of companions—a paramour, a physician and poisoner, and a pander—she, after seeking in vain to estrange from one another her sons Thierry and Theodoret, contrives successively the murder of both. The devices of the Queen and her agents are in part of an unutterably loathsome character, in particular where they are directed to the destruction of the happiness of King Thierry and his bride Ordella. But out of this disgusting intrigue materials are evolved for passages of considerable pathos; and the character of Ordella (rather hyperbolically praised by Lamb) is throughout drawn with real sweetness. It is not however in the scene (iv. 1) extolled by Lamb but too horribly unnatural in conception to be altogether satisfactory, nor in the narrative of Martell in the following scene, which loses its force from the circumstance that the reader knows it to be fictitious, that I should seek the chief beauties of the tragedy. These lie in the last scene of all, in which the sleepless misery of the poisoned Thierry is pictured with marvellous dramatic truth, unpolluted by

[1] Hallam's *Middle Ages*, i. 1. 1.—An earlier play on the subject of '*Brunhowlle*' appears, from the memoranda of Henslowe, to have been extant in 1598.

realistic grossness. The last brief interview between the King and his bride and their union in death furnish a gentle solution to a terrible situation[1].

Of the next ensuing series of plays, there seems no reason to doubt the joint authorship of both dramatists.

Plays by Beaumont and Fletcher: Philaster (1608 *circ.*).

Philaster, or, Love lies a Bleeding, though the period of its production is not quite satisfactorily established, is generally supposed to have been first acted in 1608. The cadence of its verse is by no means generally indicative of Fletcher's more peculiar manner; though the lines more frequently have double-endings than is the case in some of the later plays. On the title-page of the first extant edition (of 1620) Beaumont's name is mentioned first; a circumstance which (though this appears to have been the order adopted in mentioning their names as joint authors even before Beaumont's death[2]) may be held to favour the view, supported by a comparison of the versification[3], according to which he wrote the larger share of the play. Its popularity seems to have been exceptionally great[4].

[1] The whole of the scene v. 2, from the point where Thierry is 'brought in on a couch,' is surpassingly fine; in particular Thierry's first speech, Martell's reference to the king's mother,

> 'The mother of your woes, sir, of your waking,
> The mother of your people's cries and curses'—

and Thierry's final recognition of Ordella:

> 'Tis she! I know her now, Martell.—Sit down, sweet.
> Oh, blest and happiest woman!—A dead slumber
> Begins to creep upon me.—Oh, my jewel!'

[2] See the address *To the Reader* prefixed to Webster's *Vittoria Corombona*.

[3] Mr. Fleay assigns to Fletcher only v. 3 and 4.

[4] This is attested by the large number of editions; by the performance of a scene of the play as a 'droll' during the period of the suppression of the theatres (v. 4, under the title of *The Club Men;* as to these 'drolls' cf. *infra*, chap. viii); by the existence in 1664 of a doggrel ballad on the story of the play, by its revival after the Restoration, and by various adaptations of it at subsequent dates. One of these adaptations (apparently never brought on the stage) was printed as a tragicomedy by the Duke of Buckingham under the title of *The Restauration, or, Right will take Place*, in 1714. Settle's adaptation was acted in 1695; the elder Colman's in 1763. According to Geneste (viii. 668) *Philaster* was produced at Bath as recently as 1817.—The popularity of *Philaster* is touchingly attested by Pepys (*Diary*, May 30, 1668), who in noting his presence at a performance of the play, observes that 'it is pretty to see how

The main cause for so exceptional and enduring a popularity is of course to be sought in the exquisite pathos of the principal situations and characters of this play, and in the perfect adequacy to these of its writing. But I am further, though in opposition to the view of Hallam, partially adopted by Dyce[1], inclined to regard the plot as not less naturally than perspicuously constructed, and fully answering the demands of dramatic probability. Attention should be bestowed upon the extreme directness and simplicity of the diction in salient passages[2], which show the authors of this play to have composed it under the influence of a true dramatic inspiration.

The characters of Philaster and Arethusa are both admirably drawn, though in the former it is impossible not to recognise a weakened adaptation of the character of Hamlet. But the resemblance—which is one of situation chiefly and is striking enough in the first scene[3]—wears off, as the plot takes an independent developement; and the restoration of the reader's sympathy to Philaster is brought about in a wholly original manner. It is however neither to Philaster nor to the wronged princess that the interest principally attaches, but to the character of Euphrasia-Bellario, upon which the authors have expended the whole wealth of their pathetic power. Introduced before her appearance by a celebrated narrative passage ('I have a boy,' i. 2), which no hearer could wish shorter by a line, the maiden-page is drawn throughout with a simple sweetness unsurpassed in poetry. Shakspere's *Viola* may have suggested the first idea of the relation between Bellario

I could remember almost all along, ever since I was a boy, Arethusa, the part which I was to have acted at Sir Robert Cooke's; and,' he adds, 'it was very pleasant to me, but more to think what a ridiculous thing it would have been for me to have acted a beautiful woman.'

[1] See his General Introduction, p. xxix.

[2] *e.g.* iii. 1; and more especially the wonderfully effective dialogue in v. 2.

[3] The King's speech (ii. 4), as Theobald pointed out, forcibly recalls that of Claudius in *Hamlet* (iii. 3).—As to a resemblance in a passage of *Philaster* to one in *Henry VIII*, cf. vol. i. p. 447. A passage in iv. 3 ('The gods take part against me,' &c.) has, as Steevens has pointed out, a close parallel in *Cymbeline* (Iachimo's speech in v. 3).

and the lovers; or Beaumont and Fletcher may have taken it directly from Montemayor. The general conception is one familiar to the whole course of dramatic poetry from Peele downwards[1], and has of course not been confined to this branch of poetic fiction. Indeed some have thought the character of Bellario borrowed from that of Daïphantus in Sidney's *Arcadia* (bk. ii). But in *Philaster*, as compared with other dramatic works, including *Twelfth Night*, the self-sacrifice of love is surpassingly intense and full. Yet such are the exigencies of dramatic construction that the close, in which the sweet Euphrasia is left as it were uncared-for in the consummation of Philaster's happiness, affects the mind unpleasingly. I am almost afraid to express my opinion that a consolation should have been found for her—in death; (in which case the parallel to Daïphantus would have become complete).

The beauties of detail in this play are too many for enumeration[2]; but it should be observed that there is considerable vigour of characterisation even in the less important personages (Dion *e.g.*), not to speak of the humour in the scenes between Pharamond the bragging Spanish prince[3] and the frail Court ladies, and in the address of the old Captain to his 'brave myrmidons,' the revolutionary citizens (v. 4)[4].

The Maid's Tragedy (of which the first extant edition was printed in 1619) was, as there seems good reason to

The Maid's Tragedy (1610 *circ.*).

[1] Cf. vol. i. p. 207.

[2] I only instance one, in order to direct attention once more to the extreme simplicity of the diction:

> '*Phi.* Oh, but thou dost not know
> What 'tis to die.
> *Bel.* Yes, I do know, my lord:
> 'Tis less than to be born; a lasting sleep,
> A quiet resting from all jealousy,
> A thing we all pursue; I know, besides,
> It is but giving over of a game
> That must be lost.' (iii. 2.)

[3] Whose 'speech calls him Spaniard, being nothing but a large inventory of his own commendations.' (i. 1.)

[4] Dramatic propriety seems however violated in the way in which the King's ability to meet the rebellion is depicted. ('Oh, my wits, my wits!' v. 3.)

conclude[1], produced not later than 1610–11; nor is there any cause to doubt its having been the joint work of both authors (the greater share being by some critics ascribed to Beaumont[2]). It enjoyed a very high popularity till the time of the closing of the theatres, and its comic scenes were then acted as a 'droll' under the title of *The Testy Lord*. It seems that under Charles II the performance of this tragedy was prohibited, for reasons which cannot admit of much doubt, but it was acted in the latter part of that reign, as originally written[3]. On the other hand, there seems to be no evidence of Waller's namby-pamby alteration of the fifth act, though stated to have been made 'to please the Court,' having ever been brought on the stage[4]. *The Maid's Tragedy* appears to have been reproduced on the stage at intervals till the middle of the

[1] A play called *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (first printed in vol. i. of *The Old English Drama*, 1825) was licensed in 1611. It bears no resemblance to Beaumont and Fletcher's play, except that here too the subject is the guilty passion of a tyrant. But the heroine in this instance deserves to give the tragedy its name. The play is of an extremely sensational description, the tyrant's passion giving no rest to the lady even after death.

[2] Mr. Fleay ascribes to him more than three-fourths.

[3] Colley Cibber, in his *Apology*, mentions the Lord Chamberlain's prohibition as a common tradition; but Fenton, in his *Observations on Waller's Poems*, states, on the authority of the dramatist Southerne, that the play was acted in its original form at the Theatre Royal in the latter part of Charles II's reign. (Dyce.) Cibber rejects the notion that King Charles should have been moved to ordering the prohibition by any qualms about such parts of the play as might have been applied to his own affairs, and prefers the tradition that it was issued in consequence of the 'killing of the king,' a passage intolerable 'while the tragical Death of King Charles the First was then so fresh in People's Memory.' But it may be observed that kings are killed in other plays which were acted in this reign, *Hamlet e.g.*, and that there is no such pointed resemblance of situation in the case of *The Maid's Tragedy* as would justify the supposition that it was singled out for such prohibition on this account. On the other hand, without following Cibber in an attempt to discriminate too nicely between nasty points of likeness and unlikeness, it must be allowed that there is sufficient in this tragedy to have nearly touched whatever sense of shame King Charles II may be credited with. It may by the bye be pointed out that the prohibition, if it really ever took place, was not in operation in 1666 or early in 1667, when Pepys (see *Diary*, Dec. 7 and Feb. 18) saw the play performed at the King's House. On the latter occasion he was much distracted by the conversation of Sir Charles Sedley overheard by him, even when it consisted of 'very pretty' 'exceptions against both words and pronouncing.'

[4] Of Waller's innovations quite enough is quoted by Dyce; his act was in rhyme. Cf. Geneste, i. 337.

last century, and was revived on it, adapted by a modern dramatic author, within the memory of our own times[1].

Opinions have differed widely as to the merits of this tragedy among both earlier and later critics[2]; but I have no hesitation in following those who assign to it a very high, if not the highest rank, among the tragic efforts of its authors. The character of Evadne is conceived and drawn with singular power, without being carried beyond the bounds of nature. Recklessness of pride has brought about her first fall; she scorns to be loved by any but a king, and in her sinful ambition she consents to screen her guilt by a marriage shamefully contrived by her paramour. She heartlessly constrains her husband to second this vile scheme, but she is cast in too mighty a mould to counterfeit. At last a spirit as fearless as her own is brought face to face with her shame; and her brother's unflinching determination moves her guilty soul to a resolution of taking vengeance on her seducer. The scene in which she wreaks it—impossible as its presentation would be before a modern audience—is written with startling power[3]; and her own violent end is in thorough consonance with the whole course of action into which the gust of passion had at first drifted her. Yet—and here

[1] Sheridan Knowles' adaptation, under the title of *The Bridal*, was produced by the late Mr. Macready in 1837. The 'additions' of Sheridan Knowles to this play (see *French's Standard Drama*, No. xlv) are numerous, and may not uncharitably be regarded as having fulfilled one other intention besides those referred to in Mr. Macready's Preface—*viz.* that of 'writing up' the character (Melantius) which the eminent actor happened to have chosen for himself. See especially iv. 2.

[2] Among the former Rymer, in his *Tragedies of the Last Age* (a different work from the *Short View*), violently attacked it. Among other things it would appear (see Dyce's General Introduction, p. xxxii, note b) that he objected to the title as having reference to the distress of Aspatia (who is only a secondary personage in the piece). Mr. Dyce however quotes from Cunningham's *Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court* the title *The proud Mayds Tragedie*, which would certainly show that it relates not to Aspatia, but to Evadne, though in that case the title is not happily chosen. But the Elisabethan dramatists thought much less of titles than has been the case with authors belonging to later periods of stage history. — Of modern critics Hazlitt has judged this tragedy with great sourness; while Mr. Donne appears to think it has been overpraised. But he has hardly done justice to the power in Evadne.

[3] Hebbel, in his *Judith*, has a not dissimilar scene.

it is that the dramatic art of the character is made manifest—this terrible picture is drawn without monstrous features; and Evadne is not only an actually, but a dramatically, possible woman.

Like, and yet unlike, to her is Melantius her brother, a character drawn with a not less consistency and power than that of Evadne herself. The Elisabethan drama has few better types of the heroic soldier, jealous of his honour and faithful as a friend, a man of acts rather than of words, unflinching in pursuit of his purpose, but big of heart withal. By his side, it must be allowed, the unhappy Amintor plays but a sorry part; yet it cannot be denied that the ineffably pitiable nature of his situation is managed with so much skill that our sympathy in him is not extinguished. It will too be instinctively felt by the reader that the sense of the 'divinity' about the King which 'strikes dead' the rising wrath of Amintor is a reality in him, whereas to modern feeling it would, if less powerfully presented, wear the aspect of a phrase[1]. On the other hand it is difficult to regard as pre-eminently successful, or as entitled to rank near so lovely a conception as that of Bellario, the character of Aspatia, notwithstanding the pathos of the scene at the close of the play (v. 4) in which she re-appears to seek and find death from the hands of the unwitting Amintor,—though even here her insistance is not altogether pleasingly managed[2]. And I confess that the lamentations of the wronged maiden in the first and second acts are to my mind unnecessarily lengthy, and consequently by no means

[1] The passage referred to (iii. 1) seems suggested by the well-known passage in *Hamlet*; but it must be remembered how obvious the sentiment seemed to the age. *The Maid's Tragedy* contains another passage which may appear a reminiscence from *Hamlet* ('but they that are above Have ends in everything,' v. 4); but here again it would be absurd to speak of plagiarism. The scene between Melantius and Amintor (iii. 2), on the other hand, resembles passages between Brutus and Cassius in *Julius Caesar* too strikingly to allow us to regard the coincidence as fortuitous. Cf. vol. i. p. 424.

[2] Her death on the other hand is extremely touching:

'Give me thy hand; mine hands grope up and down,
And cannot find thee; I am wondrous sick:
Have I thy hand, Amintor?'

thoroughly effective. The lascivious King, and the talkative but cowardly Calianax—in some respects a likeness, but in no respects a copy, of Polonius—are admirably dramatic characters; and the humour of the scene (iv. 2) in which the coolness of Melantius outwits the unhappy old courtier is irresistible [1].

It is again necessary to remark on the vigorous simplicity, at times rising to the most effective terseness, of much of the dialogue in this tragedy [2]. In the first act a mask, of considerable beauty of diction, is introduced [3].

The Knight of the Burning Pestle (1611 *circ.*).

The Knight of the Burning Pestle (which from the bookseller's dedication to the first impression, 1613, appears to have been produced in 1611) may have been a joint composition of Beaumont and Fletcher, or the work of the latter only. The evidence—such as it is—on the point is conflicting; nor will it be considered decisive in favour of Fletcher's single authorship that this slight though amusing piece was produced (like Goethe's *Clavigo*) in the space of eight days. I cannot accept Mr. Fleay's decision that all the prose is Beaumont's;—or is the fact that Fletcher always employs verse in his later plays equivalent to a proof that in his earlier he never wrote prose, when it so suited him?

This mock heroic drama, the ancestor of a long line of similar productions, was beyond a doubt suggested by *Don Quixote*, of which the bookseller's dedication describes it as the 'elder above a year.' An English translation by Shelton was published in 1612; but the first part of the Spanish original had been before the world since 1605. The special object of the play was to apply the satire of Cervantes to what its authors were pleased to regard as the mock military ardour of the

[1] At the close Calianax confesses that he takes it

'unkindly that mine enemy
Should use me so extraordinarily scurvily.'

[2] See in particular the first part of the dialogue between Amintor and Evadne, ii. 1; that between Evadne and the King, iii. 1; and part of that between Evadne and Melantius, iv. 1.

[3] A passage in this is thought to have suggested Milton's

'Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud'

in *Comus*.

citizens of London, a sentiment largely fed by the romantic dramas which were favourites among City audiences, and to some of which references or allusions are made in the course of the Induction and action. Thomas Heywood, as has been seen, was the author of several plays of this description, among which *Jane Shore*, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Gresham* (*i.e. If You Know not Me*, Part II), and more especially *The Four Prentices of London*, are incidentally ridiculed. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is however no mere parody of any particular piece, but a burlesque on an entire species [1], as well as a sufficiently diverting attempt to ridicule the romantic and military tastes of the citizens for the diversion of the 'gentlemen sitting on stools upon the stage.' It is easy to understand why it met with an unfavourable reception, and why it was well received on its revival in the Restoration days, when a new Prologue (instead of the old one stolen from Lyly's *Sapho and Phao*) was spoken by 'Mrs. Ellen Guin.' In the interval the city train-bands had vindicated their honour to some purpose from the ridicule cast in this play on their manœuvres at Mile-End.

A very amusing Induction lets the reader at once into the secret of the fun of the piece. An entertainment is to be given to gratify the tastes of a citizen-grocer and his wife, who accordingly accompany with their comments—which are highly diverting—and with something more than comments, the progress of the drama [2]. Their special

[1] Ben Jonson, in *The Magnetic Lady*, admirably hits off the construction of this kind of drama, whose popularity by the bye is of far too robust a nature to have suffered from any satire, old or modern. Who has not seen in certain favourite theatres in London or Paris the kind of drama which accurately corresponds to the following description: 'So, if a child could be born in a play, and grow up to be a man, in the first scene, before he went off the stage: and then after to come forth a squire, and be made a knight: and that knight to travel between the acts, and do wonders in the Holy Land, or elsewhere; kill Paynims, wild boars, dun cows, and other monsters; beget him a reputation, and marry an emperor's daughter for his mistress; convert her father's country; and at last come home lame, and all-to-be-laden with miracles.' (Act i, *ad fin.*)

[2] This device, together with a couple of speeches, was borrowed from *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* by Settle in his *City Ramble, or, A Playhouse Wedding* (1710). Cf. Geneste, ii. 482.—Beaumont and Fletcher's play is humorously referred to by Glapthorne in his *Wit in a Constable* (ii. 1).

interest is excited in the performance of their apprentice Ralph, who enacts the hero. From his recital of his achievements the general character of the burlesque may be gathered; and it is perhaps unnecessary to add that the insulting giant Barbarossa is a barber, whose patients are rescued from medical treatment by the hero. The speech specially parodied is that of the ghost of Andrea in *The Spanish Tragedy*[1]. The humour of the conception

[1] v. 3: 'Enter Ralph, with a forked arrow through his head.

Ralph. When I was mortal, this my costive corps
Did lap up figs and raisins in the Strand.
Where sitting, I espied a lovely dame,
Whose master wrought with lingel and with awl,
And underground he vampèd many a boot.
Straight did her love prick forth me, tender sprig,
To follow feats of arms in warlike wise
Through Waltham-desert; where I did perform
Many achievements, and did lay on ground
Huge Barbarossa, that insulting giant,
And all his captives set at liberty.
Then honour prick'd me from my native soil
Into Moldavia, where I gain'd the love
Of Pompiona, his belovèd daughter;
And yet prov'd constant to the black-thumb'd maid
Susan, and scornèd Pompiona's love;
Yet liberal I was, and gave her pins,
And money for her father's officers.
I then returnèd home, and thrust myself
In action, and by all men chosen was
Lord of the May, where I did flourish it
With scarfs and rings, and posy in my hand.
After this action I preferrèd was,
And chosen city-captain at Mile-End,
With hat and feather, and with leading-staff,
And train'd my men, and brought them off all clear.'

He then relates the cruel way in which he was brought to his death, and bids farewell to all the good boys in merry London:

'Set up a stake, oh, never more I shall!
I die! fly, fly, my soul, to Grocers' Hall!
Oh, oh, oh, &c. [*Dies.*'

It should be added that some touches are quite above the level of ordinary burlesque—so (ii. 3):

'I am as you are, lady; so are they;
All mortal.'

Some of the rhymes in the dialogue are of Hudibrastic excellence; especially

'were I good Sir Bevis,
I would not stay his coming, by your leavès.' (iii. 1.)

is kept up with great spirit through the piece; the Cervantean colloquies between the Knight and his Squire whom he seeks to habituate to chivalrous phraseology, and between the Knight and mine host of the Bell Inn, who though addressed as a knight persistently returns to the figure of his bill, are especially amusing; and a foil to this grandiloquence is skilfully provided in the boisterous mirth of citizen Merrythought, whose lyrics, borrowed or original, are a perfect anthology of Bacchanalian glee. But it may be worth while to point out that where in the course of the action feminine devotion is introduced as a motive, it would be difficult to say whose manner is so closely imitated as that of Beaumont and Fletcher themselves—so much so that, if transposed into a serious drama, the speeches of Luce (iii. 1; iv. 5) might be justly quoted as admirable examples of tender and affecting pathos.

A King and No King (1611 *circ.*).

A King and No King (licensed 1611; printed 1619) is undoubtedly a joint production of both authors. The play was very popular both before and after the Restoration; but on its being revived in an adapted form in 1778 was not well enough received to be acted more than once[1].

It is to the credit of the later generation that it refused to welcome with applause so unhealthy, though in many respects brilliant, a production. Its plot turns on the seemingly incestuous passion of Arbaces King of Iberia for his supposed sister Panthea—a passion which she, though less ardently, returns. In the end it is discovered that they are not brother and sister (and he no King), so that their union not only becomes possible, but furnishes the solution of the knot. The immorality of the conception of this plot is not to be sought in the nature of the passion which the hero for a long time guiltily entertains. Revolting as such situations may be, they are not dramatically unwarrantable, if the moral wrong brings

[1] Geneste, vi. 490. Garrick had intended to have revived it before this; 'but it was observed,' says Davies, 'that at every reading of it in the green-room, his pleasure suffered a visible diminution—at length he fairly gave up his design.'—Dryden, in the Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, speaks of *A King and No King* as the 'best' of its authors' 'designs, the most approaching to antiquity and the most conducing to move pity;' but allows the plot to be faulty.

its punishment with it—'la règle,' as it has been well put by an eminent French critic, 'se retrouve par le remords[1];' and *Phèdre* and plays of the same description, though hovering on a dangerous brink, may be saved by the moral balance preserved in them by the author. But there is no moral recovery where a consciously intended though unreal wrong becomes a right; there is no purification of the morally guilty passion of Arbaces and Panthea in the discovery that it is one which they may entertain without offending against divine or human law.

This remarkable play has another radical fault. The overbearing pride of the King as exhibited in the earlier scenes of the play not only goes far to deprive him of sympathy at the outset, but trenches closely on the border of the comic[2]. As a character Arbaces is not untruthfully conceived; but he is not to be accepted as a tragic hero worthily sustained from first to last.

With these important cavils, it must be conceded that this play is not only written with extraordinary spirit in all its parts—the character of Mardonius, one of those plain-spoken warriors whom Beaumont and Fletcher loved to draw, and the cowardly captain Bessus, with his 'two sword-men' tutors in the noble art of finding reasons for refusing challenges, are equally admirable—but is in its passionate love-passages full of force and fire. Indeed, the passion of Arbaces in its progressive phases is depicted with terrific power; we see him at first overcome by it as by a supernatural presence[3], then miserably struggling against it with all the forces of his better nature, and finally abandoning the endeavour to resist. But, as observed, there was only one end admissible to such a

[1] Saint-Marc Girardin, *De la nature de l'émotion dramatique*, in *Cours de Littérature Dramatique*, i. 5.

[2] Hazlitt seems to think this a merit; and suggests that 'perhaps this display of upstart pride was meant by the authors as an oblique satire on Arbaces' low origin, which is afterwards discovered.' This is very unlikely.

[3] iii. 1: 'What art thou, that dost creep into my breast,
And dar'st not see my face? show forth thyself.
I feel a pair of fiery wings display'd
Hither, from thence. You shall not tarry there;
Up, and begone; if thou be'st love, begone!' &c.

struggle: the vindication of Law, not the healing power of accident. The dramatic power of the poets, however, remains true to them to the last; and though we reprobate from a moral and artistic point of view the nature of the solution, it must be allowed that never has joy been painted with a more wonderfully effective touch than in the last scene of this play, where Arbaces finds himself free from the unutterable oppression of a criminal passion, and free at the same time to indulge it as a lawful love.

Cupid's Revenge (1612).

Of *Cupid's Revenge* (acted early in 1612) it is necessary to speak in even more qualified terms of praise. The plot is borrowed in its main idea as well as in some of its details—though others are changed—from an episode in Sidney's *Arcadia*[1]. Now, the main idea in question is the revenge taken by the god Cupid for the overthrowing of his images throughout the kingdom or duchy of Leontius at the desire of his daughter Hidaspes, seconded by that of her brother Leucippus. The King's servants rudely put an end to the rites of the god[2]; and his revenge begins at once by Hidaspes falling in love with her father's dwarf. The miserable object of her infatuation is put to death, and she breathes her last, while her attendants pray for pardon to the insulted deity. But his wrath likewise falls upon the noble Leucippus her brother, who is seized by an unworthy passion for the widow Bacha. Discovered, he scorns to save his credit by betraying her real character. The aged King hereupon becomes enslaved by her fading charms and marries her, to the disgust of all good men among his subjects. Bacha endeavours to allure Leucippus, but he honourably rejects her advances. She is filled with a desire for vengeance, and though the interposition of her innocent daughter Urania, who in the guise of a page has followed the prince into his refuge, saves him from assassination, the monster afterwards slays him and herself with her own hand. Thus little Urania and the

[1] That of the King of Lydia and his daughter Eronia, which occupies a considerable portion of *Book II*, and in which is shown 'the strange power of love, and what is due to his authority.' An abstract is given by Dyce.

[2] See the scene i. 2, which contains a charming erotic.

King being both made away with, Cupid's revenge is complete.

Such a conception as this is wholly inadmissible in a modern drama. In a romantic comedy indeed—such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—the human personages may be represented as for a time puppets in the hands of supernatural agency; but here all ends happily, and the phantasmagoria of the night vanishes with the return of the sun. But to represent moral action as subject to the control of a power like that of the Cupid of Beaumont and Fletcher's tragedy, is to mock the significance of the idea of moral responsibility altogether. The insult offered by Hidaspes and Leucippus to Cupid is not placed before us in the light of an act of human arrogance, so as to justify its consequences; and we thus have here no modern reproduction of the idea of the *Bacchae* of Euripides, but a fiction intolerable when applied to human beings otherwise under the dominion of moral laws and their results. The effect of the play is therefore derived from an impure source; and with all its vigour and vivacity, it is to be condemned as founded on a basis essentially monstrous.

The execution of this drama is generally excellent; and attention may be specially directed to the lively humour of the scene (iv. 3) of the citizens' revolt, where the tailor's valour is particularly diverting. The notion of making the innocent Urania talk what one editor defines as 'a mixture of broad Scotch and Yorkshire'—dialects, by the bye, with which the idea of childlike simplicity is not usually connected—is singularly absurd. The sturdy faithfulness of Ismenus (iv. 5), on the other hand, is in the authors' happiest manner.

The Scornful Lady (1612 *circ.*).

The Scornful Lady (produced between 1609 and 1616, and probably at some time nearer the later date than the former[1]) enjoyed great popularity[2]. It is at the same time

[1] Beaumont's death took place in 1616, and the Cleve wars (*i. e.* the wars concerning the succession to the duchies of Jülich-Cleve-Berg) referred to (v. 3) began in 1609. But the phrase 'some cast Cleve captain' (v. 4) seems to indicate that those wars had been going on for some time.

[2] A 'droll' was taken from it; and it was revived after the Restoration,

a coarsely-conceived and coarsely-executed work, which will give little pleasure to the judicious reader. The 'Scornful Lady' is a shrewish coquette, brought to compliance at last by a trick; her lovers are uninteresting; and the minor characters of the piece are mere reproductions of very ordinary stage-types[1]. Though written with much spirit, this comedy is hardly to be ranked above the level of a hundred other Elisabethan comedies. It is printed so carelessly—'plain staring blank verse,' as Coleridge says, being printed as prose—that the test of versification is here hardly applicable; but the play has been thought to have been chiefly written by Beaumont.

The Coxcomb acted by 1612(?).

With *The Coxcomb* (acted, according to a note of Oldys, in 1612, but it is not known whether then for the first time) fault was found on its production on account of its length, which in the printed copy is not excessive. Though the main plot of this comedy is offensive (the character who gives the play[2] its title being especially so), and neither very amusing nor very intelligible, the play has great merits. These are to be sought in the conduct of the bye-plot, which rises high in interest over the main. Viola, a sweet and pure maiden, consents to elope with her lover at midnight. But he dallies over his cups, and when he issues forth from the tavern with his drunken companions[3] forgets his promise to the trembling girl, and reels past her half unconscious. The agony of his repentance atones for his guilt[4]; and in the adventures of

making its appearance on the stage as late as 1783, altered by Cooke under the title of *The Capricious Lady*.

[1] The younger Loveless's attendant 'Captain' is, as Dyce observes, a very indifferent copy of Ancient Pistol; the steward Swil, so easily led astray from the virtues of Malvolio-like propriety to a rapid apprenticeship in vice, is more original, and was stated by Addison to have suggested the character of Vellum in his *Drummer;* the usurer Morecraft (whose conversion to prodigality is imitated (Dyce) from Terence's *Adelphi*), the chaplain Sir Roger, and Abigail Younglove, who consoles herself with his hand, have abundant counterparts.

[2] It ought to have been called *The Wittol*.

[3] This scene (i. 6), in which a watch is of course introduced, must be allowed to be one of the best 'drunken scenes' in English comedy. Of the four boon companions one asks: 'How many is there on's?' 'About five,' is the answer. 'Why then, let 's fight, three to three.'

[4] See the really powerful scene ii. 4.

poor Viola and the search made for her by her lover and father lies the chief interest of the action. Her character is drawn with great purity and pathos[1]; and there is much dramatic skill exhibited in the way in which she is borne safely through her perils and finally into her penitent lover's arms. Some of the personages with whom she is brought into contact are drawn with pleasing truthfulness —thus the two rustic milkmaids and the busy scolding housewife, the latter an excellent domestic type[2]. A pompous blundering justice appropriately winds up the general action of this, so far as its bye-plot is concerned, admirable comedy.

Beaumont(?) and Fletcher's(?) The Honest Man's Fortune (1613).

The Honest Man's Fortune, acted in 1613, is probably a joint comedy, the larger share of which has been thought attributable to Beaumont[3]. However this may be, I cannot agree with the judgment of Dyce, usually so safe a guide, who pronounces this play as, 'taken altogether, a drama of superior merit.' The management of the plot seems to me tedious, nor is the interest excited by any of the characters sufficient to make the play attractive notwithstanding its dragging action. Montague 'the honest man' may preserve a dignified and cheerful demeanour under misfortune; but his virtue has its seamy sides, and though he is ultimately preferred to the hand of the mistress whom he has served with so philosophical a temper[4], he

[1] How charming *e. g.* is her lament (iii. 3):

> 'I 'll sit me down and weep:
> All things have cast me from 'em but the earth.
> The evening comes, and every little flower
> Droops now, as well as I.'

[2] See in particular her preparations for her son's return home (iv. 3). One of her servants angrily says of her (v. 3):

> 'The devil a good word will she give a servant;
> That 's her old rule: and God be thanked, they 'll
> Give her as few; there is perfect love on both sides.'

[3] Mr. Fleay is inclined to think it a joint composition of Fletcher (whose share he would confine to act v) and some other author or authors, not Beaumont. This play has been adapted for the modern stage by Mr. R. H. Horne.

[4] This *dénouement* is thought to have been borrowed from a very effective and pathetic tale in Thomas Heywood's *Nine Books of Various History concerning Women*; but no edition of this book was published before 1624.

has not only at an earlier stage of his career sought to console himself by sin for misfortune (i. 3), but during his servitude accepted the pretended matrimonial proposals of a waiting-woman (iv. 1). The faithful page Veramour, whom one of the characters persists in taking for a woman in disguise, till the boy confesses that he is such, having taken example 'by two or three plays' (v. 3), is pleasingly drawn, but the relation between him and his master hardly rises to pathos, while in the character of his persecutor Laverdine and the other suitors of Lamira there is nothing to distinguish them from the ordinary caricatures of courtier, captain, and merchant in search of fortune[1].

Beaumont and Fletcher's Wit at Several Weapons (before 1616).

The epilogue composed for the 'reviving' of the comedy of *Wit at Several Weapons* (of uncertain date of production) implies that it was only in part by Fletcher; nor is there any reason to doubt Beaumont's co-operation. The same authority praises it as 'no vulgar play,' an encomium to which it is not easy to subscribe. For this comedy, though exhibiting a profusion of characters which here and there have touches of a certain vigour, is neither perspicuous in construction nor pleasing in detail. Sir Perfidious Oldcraft, a very faint likeness of Sir Giles Overreach, is determined to let his son live by his wits and to marry his niece to a rich fool—Sir Gregory Fop. The son's escapades prove so costly to his father, that the latter ends by making him an allowance; and the niece marries the lover of her own choice, an ingenious trickster of the name of Cunningham. The character of Credulous Oldcraft, Sir Perfidious' nephew 'raw' from Cambridge, is another example of the limited results ascribed by the dramatists to a University education, which in this case had lasted nine years (iv. 1). The picture of society which this comedy

[1] At the end of the play are printed some vigorous lines by Fletcher, *Upon an Honest Man's Fortune*, which have no connexion, except that of a general agreement of sentiment, with the subject of the play. The closing lines which furnish the keynote have been often quoted:

> 'Man is his own star, and that soul that can
> Be honest, is the only perfect man.'

For the converse of this, finely expressed, see Montague's speech at the opening of act iv. of the play.

unfolds, with its gentlemen and gentlewomen of the highway, is the reverse of pleasing; while the satire is hardly directed with much bitterness except against the cozened cozener, old Sir Perfidious[1].

The Knight of Malta (before 1619).

The Knight of Malta (the date of which is fixed in one direction by the death, in March 1619, of Richard Burbadge who acted one of the characters) is regarded by Dyce, in opposition to Weber, as the work of Fletcher only. But the versification of the first and the last acts differs from that of the remainder of the play which is genuinely Fletcherian. The question is interesting; and I am glad to be supported by Mr. Fleay's opinion in ascribing to Beaumont one of the noblest scenes of its kind in our Elisabethan drama,—a scene which by the earnest purity of moral feeling which it exhibits would redeem many sins against decency, and against that consciousness of a moral law of which decency is only an outward expression. I refer of course to the scene (v. 1) in which Oriana's eloquence guides the thoughts of Miranda from a grosser passion to a spiritual love.

The whole of this play, of which the plot is so far as is known original and unconnected with any historical tradition, is written with sustained power, often rising to poetic fire. The background on which the passions of the evil Mountferrat and his black paramour Zanthia (who to secure his ultimate fidelity becomes the agent of his dark designs against the virtuous Oriana) contend against the harmonious dictates of law and morality, is in any case chosen with great tact; and the author or authors have entered with something like genuine sympathy into the significance of the code of chivalry which they celebrate. The soldier-like straightforwardness of the Danish hero Norandine stands in pleasant contrast to loftier ideals of

[1] *Wit at Several Weapons* was altered in 1709 by Colley Cibber under the name of *The Rival Fools*, in which, as he was good enough to say in the Prologue,

> 'From sprightly Fletcher's loose confed'rate Muse,
> Th' unfinish'd hints of these light scenes we choose.'

The original drama, he added, was so hastily written as scarcely to have furnished 'the trimming of a play' to himself. See Geneste, ii. 412.

military virtue; and though the plot is not without its weak point[1], it is full of action vigorously sustained and finding an appropriately solemn close.

Four Plays in One (before 1616).

A brief mention is all that seems necessary with reference to the incongruous series of four one-act plays linked together by a purely artificial bond under the name of *Four Plays or Moral Representations, in One* (not known to have been printed before the folio of 1647). The practice of occasionally presenting several plays in succession on the same occasion—'in one' as the term was—appears not to have been unusual, its object doubtless being, as Dyce suggests, that variety which theatrical audiences have at all times loved[2]. Beaumont and Fletcher's *Four Plays in One* are united after a fashion by an Induction of no very striking novelty of invention, and by a uniformity of title designed to give a semblance of symmetry to the combination. The Induction supposes the plays to be presented in honour of the wedding of King Emmanuel of Portugal with the Infanta Isabella of Castile—an event which took place (the real Isabella was a widow) in 1493 *circ.* The Poet who speaks the Prologue promises 'four several Triumphs' 'of Honour, Love, Death and Time,' which give their titles to the several plays. The device of these designations has been thought to have been borrowed from Petrarch, but his *Trionfi* are of course not dramatic[3]. The title of *Triumphs* had already frequently been made use of in dramatic entertainments of various descriptions in England[4].

Beaumont and Fletcher's *Triumphs* are not specially

[1] The jealousy of Gomera which leads to Oriana's supposed death seems called forth in far too hasty a manner (iii. 2).

[2] 'Four playes in one' are noted in Henslowe's *Diary* as performed on March 6th, 1591 (2); 'and five playes in one' on April 7th, and again 15th, 1597. Mr. Collier *ad* Henslowe's *Diary*, p. 22, says that *The Yorkshire Tragedy* was a play belonging to such a group. Two plays also seem on at least one occasion to have been performed in succession. It does not appear whether these several plays 'in one' were always linked together by an Induction, as in the case of those referred to in the text, the only complete example of the practice extant.

[3] They were imitated in the Spanish *Triunfos Morales* of Franscisco de Guzman. Ticknor, iii. 61, *note*.

[4] Cf. vol. i. p. 80.

interesting. The first, *The Triumph of Honour*, a dramatic version, with altered scene and miracle, of one of Boccaccio's novels (x. 5), is a sufficiently commonplace production. At its close occasion is taken for a pleasing protest against the Puritan incapacity to 'raise use' from poetry[1]. *The Triumph of Love* is a rather closer version of another story from the *Decamerone* (v. 7); and though the action has here to be helped on by two elaborate dumb shows, and is moreover in part extremely ill-suited for representation on the stage, the little piece contains passages of a simple sweetness which did not fail to attract the kindly eye of Charles Lamb[2]. *The Triumph of Death*, founded on a novel by Bandello, 'cruddles' into its narrow compass an amount of passion and crime which would fill a tragedy. But the concluding *Triumph*, that *of Time*, is certainly calculated to cool down excitement; for it is nothing but a frigid and commonplace allegory concerning Anthropos and his false and true friends, which, apart from the superior excellence of the writing and versification, differs in no respect from any average specimen of the later moralities. It may perhaps be worth while to note that Plutus, the god of riches, whom Time brings to the succour of Anthropos, with his assistants Industry, the Arts and Labour, has his dwelling in 'a wild Indian region'—*i. e.* in that Dorado towards which the age of Beaumont and Fletcher had not ceased to cast wistful eyes.

It has been already stated that, from the much larger number of double-endings in the latter two of these four plays, and of rhymes, besides a considerable amount of

[1] 'What hurt's now in a play, 'gainst which some rail
So vehemently? thou and I, my love,
Make excellent use, methinks . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . Sweet poetry's
A flower, where men, like bees and spiders, may
Bear poison, or else sweets and wax, away:
Be venom-bearing spiders they that will;
I'll be the bee, and suck the honey still.'

[2] See his *Specimens*, pp. 293, 294. Lamb ascribes this *Triumph* to Beaumont only.

prose, in the former two, Mr. Fleay has concluded that these may be assigned to Beaumont, the others to Fletcher. On the evidence of the versification, I should certainly be inclined to accept his conclusion.

Beaumont (?) and Fletcher's The Captain (by 1613).

The concluding lines of the comedy of *The Captain* (acted at Court in May, 1613, and previously elsewhere) aver it to be the intent of every noble action

'to give worth reward, vice punishment.'

If the same be the purpose of every drama commending itself to our moral sense, no play has ever strayed more utterly from the right path than this comedy. Its dialogue has some fine passages, and a few graceful lyrics are interspersed in it; but the whole play must be passed by as containing one of the worst aberrations of perverted imagination. The character of Lelia is indescribably offensive, and there is a scene the horrible conception of which, as introduced into a comedy, almost surpasses belief. Yet a wretched comedy-close of a hurried marriage is allowed to patch up a plot previously carried into depths which nothing but the most awful tragic retribution could have appropriately ended. Captain Jacomo, who gives its name to the play, is a far from pleasing type of the blunt soldier who hates 'peace and perry' and female society, and can hardly be said to deserve the good fortune which falls to his lot. The coarseness of some of the comic scenes of this play might however perhaps be pardoned, but no condemnation is too strong for the loathsome lengths to which the in itself disgusting conception of Lelia is carried.

It is possible, as the Prologue of this play speaks only of one author, as two copies of commendatory verses treat it as Fletcher's only, and as moreover the number of double endings is excessively large, that Beaumont had no share in it. 'Judgment' seems in any case wanting in the composition.

Fletcher's (probably alone)

The comedy of *Wit without Money* (written not before 1614, as is proved by a passage in the play[1]), a play of

[1] ii. 4: 'Dragons in Sussex, sir, or fiery battles
Seen in the air at Aspurg.'

Wit without Money (1614 or post).

long-enduring popularity[1], is in the edition of 1639 ascribed to both dramatists, in the Prologue of the adaptation of 1708 to Fletcher only. On the evidence of style the latter supposition seems the more probable; and Mr. Fleay's test agrees with Dyce's opinion in supporting this view.

This play deserves the praise of originality in the conception of the two chief characters, Valentine and Lady Heartwell, the force of which is perhaps rather weakened by the parallel nature of the situation between their respective brother and sister, Francisco and Isabella, who are drawn neither as a contrast to nor as a copy of the other pair. The conception of both Valentine and the widow is excellent. He is a young man of nobility of feeling, but of perverse contempt for the ways of the world, among which in his philosophy he reckons the maintenance of an estate, the receiving of rents, and respect for property in general, including his own. It is his maxim, that a man ought to live by his wits alone, and scorn the thought of money. Besides these ideas, he is possessed by a strong contempt for women, and for widows in particular. Reduced to poverty by carrying out his views[2], he is rescued by the affection of the fair widow Heartwell, as freespoken and as high-spirited a personage as himself[3]. The scene (iii. 1) in which he is first attracted to her by her vigorous defence of her sex against his taunts is admirably conceived; and though the interest abates towards the close, while there is ignobility in the device that the effects of sack are necessary for determining the resolution of the brothers, the

'A strange monstrous Serpent' was discovered in Sussex in 1614, and is also alluded to in Jonson's mask of *News from the New World* (1620). See Dyce's note, iv. 128, where he conjectures *Asperg* for *Aspurg*, and notes Weber's conjecture that the latter may be a corruption of *Augsburg* or *Habsburg*. I do not know whether Weber hit upon Augsburg because of the legend of the '*Hunnenschlacht*' on the Lech (955), familiar to the admirers of Kaulbach.

[1] Acted at intervals, according to Geneste, up to 1757.

[2] Which indeed savour of a universal benevolence such as has at other times been fashionable among young men of birth and education. (See i. 1.)

[3] Her sister's description of her (i. 2) is an excellent sketch of a young lady who has profited by the higher education which she has bestowed upon herself.

play deserves to rank among the higher class of Elisabethan comedies, in which character is drawn with originality and force. And there is an odd applicability to notions of our own day in the humours of Valentine and the widow which gives a special relish to the reading of this piece.

Fletcher's (probably alone) Bonduca (before March, 1619).

The tragedy of *Bonduca* (produced some time before March, 1619, when Richard Burbadge, who performed one of the characters, died) is probably to be regarded as Fletcher's unassisted work. It would of itself establish his claim to a high rank among English authors of romantic tragedy.

The subject of this play, originally derived from Tacitus (*Annals*, xiv. 29, *seqq.*), has commended itself to the notice of several dramatic poets. Apart from Fletcher's tragedy, and several alterations which it underwent at the hands of successive adapters [1]), the story of Bonduca or Boadicea has been treated by at least two other English dramatists, while that of Caractacus has furnished the materials for yet another tragedy [2]. It would indeed be strange if one of the most striking episodes of British history, narrated in something more than outline by the most dramatic of ancient historians, had not attracted the attention of English playwrights.

Fletcher, however, has used his materials with the utmost freedom, while at the same time scanning them with no hasty eye. Thus *e.g.* he has developed Tacitus' brief mention of the fate of the Roman officer Poenius Postumus (*Annals*, xiv. 37) into a series of striking scenes, interwoven with admirable skill into the general action of his drama.

Its real hero is not Bonduca, whose heroic death expiates a fatal want of prudence, not to say of wisdom, but Caratach (Caractacus), in whom the dramatist has drawn

[1] Dyce notices *Bonduca, or the British Heroine*, published in 1696 by an actor of the name of George Powell; an altered *Bonduca* by the elder Coleman (1778); and a third alteration, called *Caractacus*, by Mr. J. R. Planché, acted in 1837.—The character of Hengo was imitated by Dryden in his *Cleomenes* (1692).

[2] Hopkins' *Boadicea*, acted 1697, is noticed by Geneste, ii. 118; Glover's *Boadicea* (1753) will be briefly adverted to below, as well as Mason's *Caractacus* (published in 1759).

the inspiring figure of a generous and sagacious soldier, as well as of a patriot true unto death. Bonduca falls into the second place, while the pathos of the situation is personified not so much in the two daughters—though the unwillingness of the second to offer the sacrifice of her young life is depicted with much natural force—as in the boy-prince Hengo, the companion of the last struggle of Caratach against their common doom. But though all these characters—as well as the Roman captains—are effectively drawn, the supreme merit of the play lies in the general conduct of its action. Elisabethan literature, to my knowledge, offers few examples of so vivid a drama of war; camp, battle-field, and siege are brought before us without confusion or hurry; and, at no sacrifice of clearness, a most stirring succession of scenes enables us to realise in some degree the course of a real contest of arms. It is only to be regretted that in the last act a falsely humorous effect should be sought to be drawn out of the manly emotion of Petillius, and that in order not to contradict historical tradition, which might have been freely altered, the hero Caratach should not be allowed to meet with a hero's death.

Valentinian (before March, 1619).

Valentinian (which must have been produced before the death, in March, 1619, of Burbadge, who acted one of the principal characters) has been variously regarded as the work of Fletcher only, and as having been written by him and Beaumont conjointly. The versification is in Fletcher's manner, and to his sole authorship I think it may be confidently ascribed [1].

Coleridge, in a criticism of singular power, has dwelt upon the shortcomings of this play as measured by a high moral standard. But these shortcomings are more or less common to the whole of Beaumont and Fletcher's dramatic works. As a romantic tragedy, *Valentinian* must be allowed a very high rank. The plot, which treats with considerable freedom an obscure but interesting historical

[1] An alteration was published by the Earl of Rochester *in 1685*: which Dyce condemns as in the very worst taste, but which seems to have been judicious in ending the tragedy with the death of Valentinian.

subject[1], is contrived with more than ordinary skill. The exposition in the first act is clear and striking, and the atmosphere of the tyrant's court is at once brought home to us. Valentinian's fatal passion for Lucina, the wife of Maximus,—her ruin and death,—the despair and mad desire of vengeance which seize upon her husband,—the solemn counsels of his friend Aëcius against the commission of a public wrong for the sake of private revenge,—the dark plot of Maximus to make the execution of the design possible by removing that noble friend and counsellor,—Aëcius' noble death, preceded by that of the brave soldier Pontius,—the poisoning of the tyrant, whose tortures are painted with fiery power;—the whole of this succession of incidents constitutes a dramatic action of the most effective kind. The last act, in which Maximus seizes the reins of power and is murdered in the moment of triumph by his new consort, the tyrant's widow Eudoxia, disturbs rather than intensifies the interest aroused by the preceding action. The diction of this tragedy is dignified and frequently magnificent, while the conflict of sentiments which constitutes its chief moral significance is grandly conceived and worthily represented. The last act contains an incidental scene of some humour and the best of the many fine lyrics scattered through the play[2].

Plays by Fletcher only: The Loyal Subject (1618).

The Loyal Subject (acted in 1618) is wholly by Fletcher[3], and, in my opinion, one of the most spirited of his romantic comedies. Of its kind this play appears to me altogether admirable. It is strange that it should have been neces-

[1] Gibbon, who in chap. xxxv. of his *Decline and Fall* relates the crimes and death of Valentinian III, observes that the narrative of Procopius is to be distrusted, and must be supplied and corrected by five or six chronicles which can only express, in broken sentences, the popular rumours current in more or less distant provinces.

[2] *Viz.* the scene (v. 5) where the poet Paulus plots his pageant, in which he insists on having 'a Grace;' for, as his interlocutor says,

> 'This poet is a little kin to the painter
> That could paint nothing but a ramping lion;
> So all his learnèd fancies are blue Graces.'

The lyric referred to is the song 'God Lyaeus, ever young' in v. 7.

[3] It was, according to Dyce, adapted by two eighteenth-century writers—one the elder Sheridan.

sary for Dyce to point out—what no one who has read the two plays will be willing for a moment to dispute —that Fletcher's play owes no debt to Thomas Heywood's *Royal King and Loyal Subject*, though both are obviously founded on the same story. The similarity in title is far more likely to be the result of accident than of intention; while, as the scene of Fletcher's play is laid in Muscovy (that of Heywood's being England), it certainly seems probable that in this point the later dramatist followed the common authority from which the earlier preferred to deviate.

In ease of construction, naturalness of developement, variety of character, and general dramatic merit, Fletcher's play is infinitely superior to Heywood's, though in nobility of sentiment and general elevation of tone the preference must be given to the older dramatist. True loftiness of character is what Fletcher seems hardly ever quite able to draw; and thus the outburst of Archas in the climax of the action (iv. 5) lacks the dignity demanded by the general idea. But, with this exception, the character of the hero is admirably sustained; nor is anything more pleasingly true to nature than the good-will which the brave old general exhibits towards his soldiers even when reproving them. Fletcher has caught with wonderful spirit the humours of the rough fidelity of the soldiers to their general, and of the outspoken affection of the hero's son, the colonel Theodore, towards his misused father; for though a considerable number of scenes reproduce these motives, the action never becomes wearisome. In one scene, where the discontented soldiers worry the authorities by crying 'brooms'—and not brooms only —in their angry ears, the humour of the situation is seized with a vividness which induces one to pardon the coarseness of its expression. With the honest though mutinous soldiers are contrasted the courtiers, and with the faithful Lord Burris the villainous Borowsky. Nor are the female characters drawn with less spirit. The device of making one of the hero's sons assume a female disguise strikes us as farcical; but it need not have worn

this aspect on the Elisabethan stage; while the bye-plot of the love conceived for him in his disguise by Olympia is managed with pleasing tenderness. Lastly, the daughters of the general—Honora and Viola—are fresh pictures of girlish innocence[1], agreeably contrasted with one another; and the spirit of the scene in which the frank kindliness and self-possessed purity of Honora shame the Duke into a remembrance of his better nature is delightfully conceived, and executed with real propriety of feeling. Altogether, this play appears to me one of Fletcher's masterpieces, exhibiting as it does his chief gifts as a dramatist, within the limits which bounded them. Nor are there many Elisabethan dramas in which it would be so difficult to decide whether the interest excited is due in the largest measure to choice of subject, skilfulness of construction, vividness of characterisation, or excellence of style[2].

The Mad Lover (before March, 1619).

The Mad Lover (in which Burbadge acted, and which was therefore produced before March, 1619) is authoritatively ascribed to Fletcher only. Though exhibiting in diction and versification some of his most striking characteristics, and, especially in its comic scenes, written with exuberant vivacity (it contains too, v. 4, a battle-lyric of genuine spirit), the play may be passed by as an example of romantic comedy running to riot. Its hero, the rough warrior Memnon, who, utterly inexperienced in courtship, falls a sudden victim to the charms of the princess Calis, and resolves to obey literally her wish to leave his heart in her hand, is merely grotesque; he goes, as one of the characters justly observes, 'stupid mad;' and neither his madness nor its cure, nor the various other intrigues by which the action is not very perspicuously carried on, deserve any other comment besides that already made upon the play as a whole.

[1] How charming is this simile (iv. 3):

> 'What a sweet modesty dwells round about 'em,
> And, like a nipping morn, pulls in their blossoms.'

[2] The same dramatic *motive* as that of Heywood's and Fletcher's plays is treated in Lope de Vega's *El Duque de Viseo*, a tragedy founded on an episode of Portuguese history. Cf. Klein, x. 490.

The subornation of the priestess is an incident borrowed from Josephus (xiii. 4) or from a novel of Bandello (iii. 19), in which the transaction, which Fletcher has by no means literally followed, is reproduced. Lascivious as the anecdote is, it might have been made the groundwork of a striking dramatic situation, which cannot be said to be the case in this play[1].

It may be worth observing that *The Mad Lover* is the only play of Fletcher's which contains a Fool corresponding in the general treatment of the character to the Fools of several Shaksperean comedies.

The Double Marriage (prob. after March, 1619).

The romantic tragedy of *The Double Marriage* (apparently produced after Burbadge's death, which took place March, 1619) may be regarded as by Fletcher only. The sufficiently extravagant plot was doubtless borrowed from some Italian or Spanish novel (or possibly drama). Notwithstanding a great expenditure of dramatic energy, and a scene in Fletcher's most pathetic manner at the close (v. 2), *The Double Marriage* cannot be pronounced a successful effort[2]. The promise of marriage which Virolet, the husband of Juliana, makes to Martia, in order to regain liberty for himself and Ascanio, is ignoble; the heroic Juliana commands all our sympathy, while the virago Martia, even before her self-degradation, can claim none; and the death of Virolet by Juliana's hand is the result of a mere accident. The construction of the plot is accordingly dramatically unsound; and the entire interest of the play lies in the character of Juliana. The experiences of Castruccio, though in part (v. 1) borrowed from those of Sancho Panza, are uninteresting: on the other hand, there is much natural vivacity in the scene on board ship, and in the talk of the sailors generally.

The Island Princess (1621).

The Island Princess (produced in 1621) is by Fletcher only[3]. Weber has noted that the plot of this romantic

[1] It is reproduced in Shirley's *St. Patrick for Ireland* (cf. *infra*).

[2] It was revived in 1683, but appears not to have kept the stage.

[3] After the Restoration this play was reproduced, with alterations and additions, in 1669; newly altered (but not, according to Geneste, i. 456, materially changed) by Nahum Tate, in 1687; and, as an opera (with music by Purcell

drama in part resembles that of a Spanish play, *La Conquista de las Moluccas* (by Melchior de Leon). To some extent Spanish in origin, the play is also thoroughly Spanish in sentiment. A chivalrous devotion to love and honour and the exaltation of the Cross among the Pagans are glorified in this play, which is in other respects tolerably free from contact with real life. Its scene lies in the Molucca islands Tidore and Ternata, among the kings and princes of those remote regions, and the heroic garrison of a Portuguese fort. The heroine Quisara requires a good deal of converting, and is altogether an unlovely personage; the chivalrous magnanimity of the hero, Armusia, is well sustained; but Fletcher is more in his element in the character of the lively Piniero, which can hardly have been borrowed from the Spanish dramatist [1].

The Pilgrim (1621).

The Pilgrim (first acted in 1621) is by Fletcher only [2].

and others), by Motteux, in 1699. Apropos of this version it was observed, (and the observation might be applied to other librettists who have laid hands on dramas),

'Motteux and D'Urfey are for nothing fit
But to supply with songs their want of wit.'

(Geneste, ii. 164; from Malone.)

[1] Piniero's distribution of national pastimes reads oddly at the present day:

'*Christ.* I wonder much, how such poor and base pleasures
As tugging at an oar, or skill in steerage,
Should become princes.
Pin. Base breedings love base pleasures:
They take as much delight in a barratto,
(A little scurvy boat,) to row her lithly,
And have the art to turn and wind her nimbly,
Think it as noble too, (though it be slavish,
And a dull labour that declines a gentleman,)
As we Portugals, or the Spaniards, do in riding,
In managing a great-horse, (which is princely,)
The French in courtship, or the dancing English
In carrying a fair presence.' (i. 1.)

[2] It was altered by Vanbrugh, and produced in this form on 'the last day of the seventeenth century,' *i.e.* March 25, 1700, or thereabouts. The profits of a third night were assigned to Dryden (or his son Charles) on condition that he should add to the piece a Secular Mask, suitable to the solemn occasion, a lyrical Dialogue in the Madhouse between two Distracted Lovers; and a Prologue and Epilogue. (See Scott's Life of Dryden, in *Works*, i. 434.) These pieces, of which the Prologue and Epilogue were written little more than a month before Dryden's death, will be found in vol. viii. of Scott's edition. The Prologue contains an attack upon 'Quack Maurus' (Blackmore), in the

This comedy, as Weber surmised, must be founded on some Spanish or Italian novel — the former assuredly. It transplants us with singular vivacity into the scene in which it plays; and the atmosphere of southern romance, with its pilgrims and brigands, and its woods and streams[1], is reproduced with easy naturalness. The loose, but perfectly intelligible, construction of the action likewise points to a novel as its source.

Though this comedy abounds in serious and even pathetic situations, its tone is light, and its effect, owing principally to the delightful character of Juletta, one of the gayest *soubrettes* ever invented by a dramatist, decidedly inspiriting. Into the probability of the incidents—which include it is needless to reckon how many disguisings—it is quite unnecessary to enquire, while their variety keeps curiosity constantly alert. The other characters are happily distinguished; and if there is much sweet pathos in Alinda (whose love is more faithful than her charity is 'organised'[2]), there is some vigorous

author's most trenchant style; the Epilogue, though not written in a very penitent vein, is at least acceptable as containing an acknowledgment of the sins with which Jeremy Collier had charged the stage, and the main responsibility of which the poet, with more truth than spirit, seeks to shift to the Court. The Mask introduces Diana, Mars, and Venus as the tutelar deities of the reigns of James I, Charles I, and Charles II, and closes with a moral chorus worthy of quotation:

> 'All, all of a piece throughout;
> Thy chace had a beast in view:—
> Thy wars brought nothing about;—
> Thy lovers were all untrue.
> 'Tis well our old age is out,
> And time to begin a new'—

a strange farewell on the part of the great poet to the Stuart period of our national life, of which he is the most splendid representative in our literature. *The Pilgrim*, as altered by Vanbrugh, was revived on several subsequent occasions (the last in 1812).

[1] See the charming opening of v. 4.

[2] In i. 2 she, much to her father's disgust, relieves a whole army of beggars (among whom her lover Pedro presents himself as a pilgrim). On Juletta's insinuating that all may not deserve her pity, Alinda replies:

> 'Wench, if they ask it truly, I must give it:
> It takes away the holy use of charity
> To examine wants'—

a sentiment truly Spanish, or for that matter Italian too.

humour in her irascible father, whom the irrepressible Juletta, after subjecting him to a series of persecutions, towards the end of the play contrives to have confined in a mad-house. The picture of the mad-house may be contrasted with that drawn by Dekker; but even here it is difficult not to admire the stage tact of Fletcher. The suddenness with which, on the mention of a storm at sea, a gentleman who has hitherto appeared perfectly sane reveals the fact that he is Neptune (iv. 7) is so cleverly contrived that it takes the reader himself by surprise. It is in details such as this, by the side of greater things, that the sureness of Fletcher's dramatic skill so frequently exhibits itself.

The Wild-Goose-Chase 1621).

The Wild-Goose-Chase (produced in 1621) is by Fletcher only. The comedy appears to have been successful from the first, and it is on record how the author himself 'as well as the thronged theatre (in spite of his innate modesty)' could not refrain from 'applauding this rare issue of his brain.' On the recovery of the play (which had been lost when the First Folio was put together), several commendatory poems hailed it as one of Fletcher's masterpieces; and it was reproduced as a comedy of his own by one of the most popular dramatists of the post-Restoration period; nor was this the close of its vitality[1]. Against the testimony of such facts a personal opinion seems of little value; and I therefore content myself with observing as to this comedy that its merits appear in the main confined to sprightliness of dialogue and effective antithesis of what there is of character. The hero, a travelled Don Juan, is cured of his unwillingness to marry by the persevering wiles of a lady in love with him; while his less self-confident companions are,

[1] As to Fletcher's helping to applaud his own comedy (an act of self-oblivion probably not so entirely without a parallel as that of Lamb when he helped to hiss his own farce) see the Dedication of the edition of 1652. Among the commendatory poems is one by Lovelace, in the most crabbed manner of the Fantastic School. Farquhar's *Inconstant, or The Way to Win Him* (1702) is taken from *The Wild-Goose-Chase;* but the close (to my mind by no means a strong part of the original) is altered. *The Wild-Goose-Chase* was revived in 1747.

after a succession of delusions, likewise conquered by female craft. I can see nothing superlatively comic in the play, but can well conceive how good acting may have ensured success to what seems after all merely an elaborate trifle[1].

Love's Cure (1622–3).

Love's Cure, or, The Martial Maid (probably produced towards the close of 1622 or in 1623) seems to have been written by Fletcher only[2]. It cannot be said to be a play of high merit, though its construction is very symmetrical, and its final situation a most ingenious deadlock[3]. The central idea—that of a young woman who has been brought up as a man, and a young man who has been brought up as a woman, both of whom nothing but the sharp cure of love is able to restore to the sentiments of their real sexes—is too extravagant to be tolerable except in a farce; nor is the coarseness to which the conception is likely to lead avoided in this comedy. Much rough fun is however the result, as well as some not unpleasing sentiment[4]; and to the former, the serving-man Bobadilla, a very humorous figure, is the chief contributor. The villainous Alguazil is an energetic variation on that favourite butt of Elisabethan comedy, the incompetent guardian of the night. In passages of this play[5] there

[1] The pseudo-pathetic scene iv. 3 is again worthy of notice. Orima's pretended madness is almost as affecting as if it were real; how sweet *e.g.* is this touch:

'Certain she knows you not, yet loves to see you.'

[2] The date, otherwise uncertain, is thought to be approximately fixed by an allusion in ii. 2 to the Russian ambassador's remaining in his house during the winter of 1622—a historical fact. Beaumont and Fletcher are both mentioned as authors in the Prologue; but this was only spoken at a revival; in the Epilogue one author only appeals to the audience.

[3] See v. 3. Alvarez and his son Lucio are about to fight a mortal combat with Vitelli and his friend Lamoral, in spite of the entreaties of Alvarez' wife Eugenia, his daughter Clara (beloved by Vitelli), and Genevora (beloved by Lucio). Enter Bobadilla, with two swords and a pistol. The two young ladies present the swords at one another's bosoms, and Bobadilla levels the pistol at Eugenia. 'Come down,' says the Judge, reminding one irresistibly of the Beefeater in *The Critic*.

[4] The first awakening of tender love in Clara's breast is prettily depicted (ii. 2).

[5] See especially the cobbler's eulogium of the 'gentle craft' (ii. 1).

is a tendency to humorous characterisation more in Jonson's manner than in Fletcher's, who is ordinarily less given to amplitude in this direction.

A Wife for a Month (1624).

A Wife for a Month (first acted 1624) is a romantic drama—or 'tragicomedy,' as it calls itself in one of the folios—by Fletcher only. It is possible that, as Langbaine suggests, the imprisonment of King Alfonso of Leon by his brother Sancho of Castile (in the eleventh century) and Alfonso's ultimate restoration to power may have suggested such historical background as the play possesses; but it is more probable that its story was derived by Fletcher from some unknown novel. The revolting nature of the plot of the piece is not redeemed by any fineness of execution. Even the best-written passage (Queen Maria's speech in ii. 2) is but hollow rhetoric—for it is not the speaker who is to die, and her readiness for death is therefore worth very little; while the language of the heroine is frequently that of an angry scold rather than that of a loftier type of moral indignation[1]. Indeed the want of elevation of tone and feeling in this play is so conspicuous a defect that no further words need be lost on it. The outcries of the poisoned Alfonso (iv. 4), however, should be noticed in proof that Fletcher could on occasion outvie any of his fellow-dramatists in extravagance of expression[2].

Rule a Wife and Have a Wife (1624).

Rule a Wife and Have a Wife (first acted 1624) is a comedy wholly by Fletcher. Its under-plot is borrowed from a novel of Cervantes; but the main plot appears to be Fletcher's own. Though of course it is to some degree cognate to that of *The Taming of the Shrew*, it has features sufficiently distinctive to entitle it to be called original, as well as dramatically excellent. The indigent and despised

[1] See *e.g.* i. 2, and the passage in v. 3 in which she says—at the very height of the situation—

'To see your throat cut, how my heart would leap, sir!'

[2] Weber has directed attention to certain resemblances between this play and *The Maid's Tragedy*; but, as he observes, the scenes in question are differently conducted.—The sufficiently audacious device of Alfonso being *cured* by a draught of poison I think I have met with—of course in a far more elaborate form—in one of M. About's novels.

husband, whom a proud beauty has married with the intention of having a poor creature to serve as a cover for her extravagances, and who at the very moment in which she has surrounded herself by her admirers asserts himself as master of both his house and his wife, and ends by securing her love and the respect of all, is an admirable conception admirably carried out. And though this comedy is as usual disfigured by a great amount of coarseness, and is, except in occasional touches[1], deficient in real nobility of sentiment, the vigour of its execution—more especially in the last three acts—as well as the felicity of its central idea, together with the effective climax of its final situation, warrant the exceptionally enduring popularity which it has enjoyed[2].

Monsieur Thomas (before Aug. 1625).

The comedy of *Monsieur Thomas* (of unknown date) is wholly by Fletcher[3]. The serious part of the plot is thought to have been probably borrowed from Boccaccio —there is some pathos in the course of its development (see ii. 5); but the humorous part of the piece, in which its main merit consists, is obviously Fletcher's invention. 'Monsieur Thomas,' the travelled scapegrace, whose manners have not been mended by his experiences, and who alternately disgusts his pretty Mary by his wildness, and his jovial parent by an assumption of propriety, till he is all but rejected by the one and disinherited by the other, cannot be regarded as an estimable character; in fact, he is a little worse than his namesake immortalised by Fielding. But the gaiety of the figure is

[1] Such as this in iii. 5, when the Duke, Leon having asserted himself as master of the situation, leaves him with a request that he will use his wife well. Leon replies—and few such touches of true manly dignity will be found in Fletcher—

'Mine own humanity will teach me that, sir.'

[2] After furnishing materials for a droll, *An Equall Match*, this comedy on the re-opening of the theatres became an established favourite, and having been altered in Garrick's days was frequently revived in the last and the present century. I have seen more than one play the central idea of which was evidently based on that of *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*.

[3] It was revived by D'Urfey under the title of *Trick for Trick* in 1678, the 'modish spark' being on this occasion, according to the Prologue, dressed 'fit to be shown.' D'Urfey's title has since been borrowed for other plays.

contagious; and the play must be taken, or left aside, in company with *The Humorous Lieutenant*, while of course more interesting than this as a picture of manners, in which respect it is surpassed by few Elisabethan comedies. The scene with the Doctors (iii. 1) is an admirable bit of farce; and Launcelot's description of a frolic in the streets (iv. 2) may be instanced as a probably accurate description of a species of amusement as eternal as youthful folly itself.

The Humorous Lieutenant (before 1625).

The Humorous Lieutenant (of uncertain date) is by general consent considered to be by Fletcher only. The play, according to a MS. bearing date 1625, had for its second—or first—title the names of the hero and heroine of its serious action, *Demetrius and Enanthe*. But the Humorous Lieutenant, whose popularity was long unbounded, gives its name to the play in both the folios[1].

The enduring popularity of this comedy is by no means surprising. Though it abounds in passages over which propriety must draw a veil, its merriment is irresistible, and even apart from the farcical figure and doings of the Lieutenant, the writing displays a freshness and naturalness of both pathos and humour, inclining us for once to pardon a grossness which cannot in this instance be said to be designed to pander to immorality. The Lieutenant himself, with his paradoxically constituted nature which prompts him to fight when he is ill and rest when he is well, the uncontrollable vehemence of his base-born heroism, his audacious intrusion upon the prince's privacy and its results (iv. 4), and his passion for the king, the effect of his having drunk off a dram intended for another person, are Aristophanic in their absurdity, and, as the

[1] A droll founded on his humours was performed during the time of the suppression of the theatres; and the comedy itself was chosen for the opening of the 'Theatre Royal' in Drury Lane in 1663, and long afterwards continued a favourite play. Pepys mentions it twice (*Diary;* April 20, 1661, and January 23, 1667, on the latter occasion describing it as 'a silly play, I think,' but approving of the sensation of the Spirit). According to Geneste it was several times revived in the eighteenth century; and even once in the present (as altered by Reynolds, 1817, when Macready played Demetrius and Liston the Lieutenant. Cf. Geneste, viii. 605).

epithet implies, not so much trench upon, as recklessly invade the borders of the wildest farce[1]. But it would be unjust to the merits of this play, not also to refer to the very pleasing couple of Demetrius and Celia, with whom the main action is concerned. For the story of this amour Fletcher was not indebted to Plutarch, from whom he may, together with a species of historical background, have derived his general conception of his hero (Demetrius Poliorcetes, a most interesting historical figure, 'the Alcibiades of his age,' as he has been called by a modern historian of Greece[2]). As a love-story it has few equals in the Elisabethan drama, from the first parting of the lovers (i. 2), which partly recalls Romeo and Juliet, partly Egmont and Clärchen, to their final restoration to confidence in one another (v. 5). And the figure of Celia-Enanthe is charming in itself—one of those bright but pure female characters which Fletcher when he chose was so well able to draw[3].

The Custom of the Country ('old' in 1628).

The Custom of the Country is mentioned as an 'old play' in November, 1628, and was therefore produced at some time before that date. It is probably wholly Fletcher's work. The fine episode of the mother who, rather than violate the laws of hospitality, refuses to betray the fugitive in whom she has discovered the slayer of her son—but not its unpleasing sequel of her marriage with him—is taken from a novel of Cervantes[4].

[1] The story from which the notion of this character is taken occurs in Ford's *Apothegms*, and has only a very secondary resemblance to an anecdote related by Horace, to which it has been compared (*Epist.* ii. 2. 26–40).

[2] Bishop Thirlwall, in whose fifty-eighth chapter may be read an account of the unlucky battle of Gaza, introduced into the play. Demetrius was really married to Eurydice, a descendant of Miltiades.

[3] Honora, in *The Loyal Subject*, is another example of the same pleasing type. Celia's answer to the advances of the King (iv. 1) may be quoted as an instance of Fletcher's happiest manner:

'*Celia* (*rising*). I cannot love you;
Without the breach of faith, I cannot hear you:
You hang upon my love like frosts on lilies:
I can die, but I cannot love. You are answered. [*Exit.*'

The charm (iv. 4) should be noticed, as a very graceful imitation of the incantation in *Macbeth*.

[4] Cervantes' *Persiles y Sigismunda* appears to have been Fletcher's original,

While it is unfortunately impossible to dwell on this comedy, it cannot be left unmentioned, as, in spite of its unpardonable grossness, it is in construction and execution one of the most brilliant of Fletcher's efforts[1]. By reason of a most ingenious, and at the same time perspicuous intermingling of plots, the merits of this play are so inextricably interwoven with its vices, that no further description is admissible. The 'bacchanal' passion of Hippolyta cannot be pardoned for the sake of the pathetic devotion of Zenocia; nor can Rutilio's bestiality be forgiven on account of his kindly simplicity. The play must be placed high on the index which the most lenient view of our drama is obliged to shun, though not without a regret that such a talent as is here exhibited should have thus prostituted one of its happiest moments[2].

Women Pleased (before 1625).

Women Pleased (of unknown date), probably by Fletcher only, may be passed by as a romantic comedy, which might almost be called an extravaganza,—to such an extent is odd incident crowded into the framework of the piece, the variety in the metre corresponding to the character of the construction. Its plot is a cento of more or less slippery anecdotes, borrowed in one instance from Chaucer[3], and in not less than three instances from that

though the story also occurs in Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*. See Ticknor, ii. 133, *note*. This part of the plot, which was also used by Calderon in his *Mejor está que estaba* (see G. H. Lewes, *The Spanish Drama*, p. 8), is borrowed in Cibber's *The Fop's Fortune* (1701). Into the history of the custom which gives its name to the play it is unnecessary to enter; suffice it to say that the unerring instinct of later adapters seized upon this as well as other obnoxious features in this comedy for subsequent reproduction, and that the custom is essentially the same as that which suggested the plot of Beaumarchais' immortal *Mariage de Figaro*.

[1] It is however pleasant to find the moral element in Pepys' character constrain him to declare this 'of all the plays that ever he did see, the worst, having neither plot, language, nor anything in the earth that is acceptable; only Knipp sings a song admirably.' (*Diary*, Jan. 2, 1666/7.)

[2] It may be worth while to notice among the minor characters of this comedy one of the few, and one of the least pleasing, Jews of the Elisabethan stage. As is well known, there were few or no Jews in England from the close of the thirteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century.

[3] *The Wif of Bathes Tale.*

magazine of such wares, the *Decamerone* of Boccaccio The starved lover of good eating, Penurio, is an amusing example of a favourite comic type[1].

The Woman's Prize ('old' in 1633).

Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize, or* (and this seems to have been the popular title of the play) *The Tamer Tamed* (certainly produced before 1633[2]) is chiefly interesting as an attempt on the part of a popular dramatist to 'cap' rather than continue a notable success on the part of a predecessor. In other words, this comedy was clearly produced with the view of at once making use of, and if possible surpassing, the popularity of Shakspere's *Taming of the Shrew*. If the taste of the Court be regarded as a gauge of the taste of the public at large, this attempt was at least temporarily[3] successful; for it is recorded that Shakspere's play, when played before the king and queen on Nov. 23rd, 1633, was 'likt,' and that Fletcher's, when played before them five days afterwards, was 'very well likt[4].'

[1] The diverting scene of the Morris-dance (iv. 1) may be noticed because of its ridicule of the Puritans, here represented by Hope-on-high Bomby, who is moved to spit on the hobby-horse as the

> 'beast, that signified destruction,
> Fore-shew'd i' the falls of monarchies.'

[2] It is described as 'an ould play' by Sir Henry Herbert in the passage of his Office-book quoted by Malone (Boswell's *Shakespeare*, iii. 208) and from him by Dyce. This passage relates the temporary prohibition of the play 'upon complaints of foule and offensive matters conteyned therein.' These matters have been conjectured to be the sneers against the Puritans, afterwards restored to the text (see iii. 2). This conjecture, I may add, seems confirmed by a passage in the Prologue, spoken at a revival of the play:

> 'The end we aim at is to make you sport;
> Yet neither gall the city nor the court.'

[3] *The Woman's Prize* was once revived in the eighteenth century as an afterpiece (1760).

[4] It may be worth while to state summarily how Fletcher carried out his notion. Petruchio (the only character taken over from *The Taming of the Shrew*; for in Tranio and Bianca we have merely *names* from its *dramatis personae*) has become a widower by the death of his first wife, whom he had tamed so victoriously, and has gained the hand of Maria, daughter to Petronius. Her a noble ambition impels to turn the tables upon the man who in his conceit is conqueror of her sex, and before she submits to him as his wife, to tame him as he tamed Katherine of old. In carrying out her design she is seconded by her cousin Bianca, while her gentler sister Livia is swept along by the

The cleverness of this comedy is undeniable, and several of the situations in the last three acts are contrived with considerable humour. At the same time, the artificial nature of the fun will not escape the reader; and *The Tamer Tamed* may be pronounced a *tour de force*, which its author has accomplished after a fashion which probably no dramatist less a master of stage effect would have equalled [1].

The Chances (before August 1625.

The Chances (of unknown date) is in all probability Fletcher's unassisted work. The long-enduring popularity of this comedy [2] explains itself from two causes. In the

torrent of their spirit to resist marriage with an old dotard and achieve her union with the lover of her choice. Maria's campaign against Petruchio divides itself into a series of actions. The first of these is rebellion pure and simple. She and her confederates fortify themselves in their chamber, where they are joined by a whole army of female insurgents, and whence they refuse to come forth except with all the honours of war. This part of the play, which has a certain resemblance to the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes, is sheer burlesque, and though likely to cause uproarious mirth in a theatre, by no means belongs to an elevated kind of comedy. The rest of the action is much better, and more closely parallel to that of the Shaksperean play, though by no means devoid of originality. First, Maria pretends to whims of all kinds of extravagance. Then she excites her husband's jealousy. Then, when he tries to win her pity by falling sick, she causes him to be locked up by himself and reported mortally sick and mad, while she pretends to be about to take her departure with all the moveables; then she turns on him for excluding her from his presence, and vows to abandon him; then she feigns madness herself, and when, to force her to betray herself, he proposes to travel, she blandly returns to her senses and wishes him Godspeed on his journey. (The humour of this scene, iv. 5, is excellent, especially her solicitude that he should take his full time for improving his mind on his travels, and not lack the necessary comforts at the outset:

'If you want lemon-waters,
Or anything to take the edge o' the sea off,
Pray speak, and be provided.')

Nothing remains for him but to pretend to die, whereupon he has the satisfaction of hearing her pronounce an epitaph on him very much the reverse of what he had expected. Thus he is tamed at last, and her victory is complete.

[1] It is worth while to observe that in the amusing scene of Livia's mock deathbed Fletcher gives another proof of the facility with which he could draw on his own resources of pathos—if the situation were not sham, there would be nothing to distinguish the pathos of Livia's 'last interview' with Rowland from that of real situations of a similar character in other plays by the same author.

[2] *The Chances* was revived, as Geneste thinks (i. 67)—already at this period with the Duke of Buckingham's alterations (Dyce dates these 1682)—in 1667. Buckingham altered the last two acts, for which he may readily be forgiven.

first place, while following in its plot a novel by Cervantes of a tolerably complicated story[1], it is in its first three acts an admirable model of dramatic construction. The situation of the two friends, of whom the one becomes in all innocence the finder of an unprotected lady, and the other of an unprotected infant, is extremely telling; and the solution of the difficulty is contrived naturally and easily. The second part of the play, though likewise founded on the novel, might with advantage have been omitted, for the action would have been complete without it; but its coarse and farcical scenes were unfortunately of a kind certain to prove only too acceptable to seventeenth-century audiences. But the merits of the comedy are not confined to its plot. The characters of the two friends Don Frederick and Don John are drawn with remarkable freshness and gaiety—they are students to the very life, and there is an honest heartiness about them which was sure to make them favourites on the stage. It must be allowed too that there is some humour in the students' landlady, Mistress Gillian; and perhaps the ridicule of magical practices implied in Vecchio's explanation of his own tricks (v. 3) may be placed to the credit of the author as a healthy satire on a credulity which, as a rule, the dramatists of this period were too ready to foster rather than expose[2].

The Noble Gentleman (acted 1626).

The Noble Gentleman (acted after Fletcher's death in 1626) is thought by Weber to have been possibly finished by Shirley; but there is no valid reason to doubt Fletcher's

Another alteration seems to have been made by Pope's friend, Sheffield Duke of Buckinghamshire (cf. Fitzgerald's *Life of Garrick*, i. 300), and in this shape the play was produced by Garrick, who must have taken special delight in the character of Don John, in 1754. According to Geneste, it was acted for the last time in 1808. A droll called *The Landlady*, taken from this comedy, was acted during the suppression of the theatres; and a comic opera *Don John, or, The Two Violettas*, founded on it by Reynolds, was performed at Covent Garden in 1821, with Charles Kemble as the hero.

[1] *La Señora Cornelia*, one of the *Novelas Exemplares*.

[2] Fletcher's disbelief in witchcraft is also attested by *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (v. 2): '*Clown*. But if they shall go to a true conjurer, and fetch us back in a whirlwind?' '*Forobosco* [the mountebank]. Do not believe there is any such fetch in astrology.'

sole authorship[1]. Though the idea of the play is perhaps rather that of a farce than that of a comedy,—in fact a modification of the familiar idea of the Induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*[2],—it is executed with great skill as well as humour; it is so managed as to sustain the weight of an action of ordinary length; and it has a satirical force, in its application to the age for which the comedy was written—an age of *parvenus*—which must have made it almost dangerously effective. The hero, Mount-Marine, is a country gentleman smitten with the ambition of rising to greatness as a courtier, in spite of the warnings of his friends. He is cured by the ingenuity of his wife, who, feigning to outvie him in a desire for court-life[3], contrives with the help of some merry friends to delude him into the belief that he has by the king's favour been raised to the rank of knight, baron, earl, duke in swift succession. His friend Claremont, who had prudently warned him against foolish ambition, is hereupon eager to take advantage of his good fortune—a very felicitous touch of nature. But the cleverness of the construction lies in the contrivance of the catastrophe, where Marine is with equal speed reduced from his dukedom of Burgundy to his original *status*, but left in the belief that he is a duke still, though to ensure his safety he must never mention it. To bring

[1] As Dyce points out, the Prologue, which speaks of the play as written by more than one author, is valueless as evidence. Not only was it written for a revival 'some twenty year' after, but was also prefixed to the 1649 quarto of *Thierry and Theodoret*. *The Noble Gentleman* was reproduced by D'Urfey in 1688, without sufficient acknowledgment, under the title of *Fool's Preferment, or, The Three Dukes of Dunstable.*

[2] As to the possible historical origin of this dramatic idea cf. vol. i. p. 376.

[3] Surely Sheridan must have remembered the scene (ii. 1) in which Marine, in a fit of despair, threatens to take his fashionable wife home into the country:

> 'Make you ready straight,
> And in that gown which you first came to town in,
> Your safe-guard cloak, and your hood suitable,
> Thus on a double gelding shall you amble,
> And my man Jaques shall be set before you.'

'I deny the butler and the coach-horse.' (*The School for Scandal*, ii. 1.)

about this result, and at the same time vary the action, the author has introduced the character of Chatillion, whose mind has been unhinged by love, and who fancies himself to have a claim to the crown, and to be surrounded by constant dangers in consequence. Chatillion's mania is touched with remarkable skill (see particularly iii. 4, iv. 3), while with infinite tact his cure is effected in a pleasing and even touching fashion (v. 1, *ad fin.*). Thus this posthumous play, though slight in conception, remains as a signal instance of Fletcher's constructive talent.

The Spanish Curate (1622).

The comedy of *The Spanish Curate* (acted 1622) is generally regarded as by Fletcher only[1]. The play was very popular after the Restoration, and has been reproduced in an altered form within the memory of our own generation[2]. The serious and comic portions of the action, if, as Dyce observes, rather loosely combined, are both interesting, though in the latter the principal attraction of the comedy will continue to be found[3]. The felicitousness too with which the most diverting scene in the whole play is invented, in order to make possible part of the comic action, is worthy of high praise[4]. Indeed, the

[1] Mr. Fleay supposes the co-operation of Massinger.

[2] The versions produced in 1749 and in 1783 seem to have been merely farces, and were each only acted once. An alteration produced at Covent Garden Theatre in 1840 is stated by Dyce to have proved highly attractive. Several later plays have been thought to be indebted for comic scenes to *The Spanish Curate*. In Dryden's *Spanish Friar* however the resemblance is limited to the husband's jealousy of his wife; the part taken in the plot by the Friar, and indeed the character of the Friar himself, are wholly different. Congreve's *Old Bachelor* owes even less—or in other words nothing at all—to Fletcher's play; the character of Fondlewife is of course a wholly different one from that of Bartolus. Dyce adds that he cannot discover any material resemblance between *The Spanish Curate* and Bickerstaffe's *The Padlock* (1768), a piece which was very successful and the plot of which, according to Geneste (v. 217), is taken from a novel by Cervantes, *The Jealous Estremaduran*.

[3] Both parts of the plot are taken directly, as Dyce has proved, from an English translation of a novel by G. de Céspedes, published in 1622 under the title of *Gerardo the Unfortunate Spaniard*. The story of Bartolus, his wife, and his pupil, is excellent of its kind, and quite equal to anything in Boccaccio; though from the account of Ticknor (*Hist. of Sp. Lit.* iii. 123) the general character of the novel appears to be of a serious cast.

[4] *viz.* the scene (iv. 5) in which the waggish parish-clerk makes a mock will in order to detain the lawyer, while Leandro is making love to the lawyer's wife. This scene was converted into a droll called *The Mock Testator*, acted

whole of the delectable device practised upon the lawyer Bartolus is presented with so much humour—the curate and his clerk, who demand christenings, weddings, and funerals at any risk (iii. 2), and who are ready to believe anything true for money (ii. 2), are drawn in so genuine a spirit of fun[1],—and the lawyer himself is so perfect a rascal after his kind[2], that the doubtful morality of the intrigue may be passed by. The serious plot is less effective, but it is in part executed with some force, though the exposition at the beginning of the play is, for so light-handed a dramatist as Fletcher, unnecessarily lengthy.

The Beggars' Bush (1622).

The Beggars' Bush (first acted 1622) is generally regarded as by Fletcher only[3]. The oddity of the scenes which give the play its title, and which are certainly elaborated with great industry, accounts for the popularity which it has enjoyed at various times and in various

during the period of the suppression of the theatres. In part it recalls many other mock wills to be found in comic literature, such as Butler's of the Earl of Pembroke; but the way in which the testator, warming to his work, at last betrays the joke by the infinitude of his resources, is quite *sui generis*.

[1] The curate Lopez is all for the Book of Sports, and rejoices in finding that his parishioners have no longer 'Puritan hearts' and 'spurn all pastimes.' The song with which they celebrate his consent, under these circumstances, to remain their pastor, is well known (see iii. 2).

[2] One or two touches may be cited to show how thoroughly Fletcher entered into the character. In conducting an arbitration between impecunious parties he is expeditious enough:

> 'I have been atoning two most wrangling neighbours:
> They had no money, therefore I made even' (iii. 4);

but in the suit of a paying client he takes another tone:

> 'I must have witnesses
> Enough and ready . . . .
> Substantial, fearless souls, that will swear suddenly,
> That will swear anything.
> *Hen.* They shall swear truth too.
> *Bar.* That's no great matter: for variety
> They may swear truth; else 'tis not much look'd after.' (iii. 1.)

By the bye, how true the beginning of Bartolus' speech in court is to an immortal forensic mannerism:

> '*Bar.* Hum, hum—
> *Jan.* That preface,
> If left out in a lawyer, spoils the cause,
> Though ne'er so good and honest.' (iii. 3.)

[3] Mr. Fleay thinks that Massinger co-operated (contributing act i).

forms[1]. Such plot as the play possesses—and it is very little—together with its respectable characters, from the generous merchant of Bruges (a prince unknown to himself) to the worthy but inebrious burgomaster Vandunk[2], may be passed by; for the attraction which this comedy exercised was undoubtedly due to its picture of the commonwealth of beggars. Fletcher has in this instance shown a diligence in details reminding one of Ben Jonson; but though the terminology of the beggars may be as accurate as their songs are characteristic and their doings amusing, there is not much genuine humour in the whole business. The best passage is 'orator Higgen's' loyal address to the newly-elected king of the beggars, in which the parody on a passage in Shakspere's *Henry VIII* will not be overlooked[3]. The comedy is to be regarded as a successful essay on its author's part in a direction unusual with him[4].

[1] Besides a droll, *The Lame Commonwealth*, being taken from this play, it was thrice reproduced in altered forms; the last time under the title of *The Merchant of Bruges, or Beggar's Bush*, in 1815. The author of this version was the Hon. Douglas Kinnaird, and Edmund Kean acted the part of Goswin with great success. (See Hawkins' *Life of Edmund Kean*, i. 340.) I should imagine that Brome derived the notion of *The Jovial Crew, or the Merry Beggars* (1669) from Fletcher's comedy.

[2] Is he the original of the hero of Bishop's famous glee? See the close of ii. 4, where Hubert proposes to rechristen him Van-drunk; and where he maintains his political consistency even when uncertain of his legs:

'Let me go;
No man shall hold me [up], that upholds him.
Do you uphold him?
Hub. No.
Vand. Then hold me up.'

'Under him
Each man shall eat his own stolen eggs and butter,
In his own shade or sunshine.' (ii. 1.)

Cf. vol. i. p. 448. I may add that I cannot think Higgen's observation towards the close (v. 2), when he proposes emigration to England as a new field of labour—

'The spirit of Bottom is grown bottomless'—

an allusion to the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. May not 'bottom' here signify simply mercantile adventure? Prig replies 'I'll maund *no more, nor* cant.'

[4] The plot of this comedy is said (by Mr. Lewes) to be taken from the *Fuerza de la Sangre*, a novel by Cervantes. In any case, Fletcher's beggars probably owe their origin to the gipsies of Cervantes (cf. *ante*, p. 78).

The Sea-Voyage (1622).

The Sea-Voyage (licensed 1622) is generally regarded as by Fletcher only[1]. The fancy of a commonwealth of women, which forms the central idea of this romantic play, is of course traceable to the Argonautic legend of Hypsipyle on Lemnos, reproduced in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (Canto xx). The incidents in the first act are compared by Dyce to those in Warner's *Pan his Syriax* (Calamus i; the work was licensed in 1584). Dryden, in the Preface to his version of Shakspere's *Tempest*, goes too far in describing *The Sea-Voyage* as 'a copy of Shakspere's *Tempest*;' but justly points out as suggested by that play 'the storm, the desert island, and the woman who had never seen a man.' The plot is however as a whole very unlike Shakspere's, while in manner and tone there is a radical difference. Vivaciously written, especially in the scenes on shipboard and among the sailors on land (Fletcher seems to have had a thorough appreciation of sailors' ways[2]), *The Sea-Voyage* is a piece of thorough extravagance from first to last, occasionally relieved by touches of pathos, but also descending to coarseness of various kinds, in the direction both of the indecent and the horrible (as in the scene where the heroine is nearly eaten). The revolting realism of much in this play, in the midst of its fanciful conception, shows painfully enough the difference between a theatrical and a poetic imagination. It was in an unhappy hour that the author of *The Sea-Voyage* courted an irresistible comparison.

The Prophetess (1622).

The Prophetess (licensed 1622) is a romantic drama possibly not wholly by Fletcher[3]. Though reproduced

[1] Mr. Fleay has suggested the co-operation of some unknown author. *The Sea-Voyage* was altered by D'Urfey under the title of *A Common-Wealth of Women* (1685), and acted in this form several times up to 1746.

[2] Cf. *ante*, p. 201. The character of the honest Tibalt is excellently sustained.

[3] In 1690 it was ascribed to Beaumont and Fletcher. Mr. Fleay has ascribed it to Fletcher and Massinger, on the score of versification. But though the hasty composition of the play makes the co-operation of some other author a not improbable conjecture, I should hardly suppose Massinger to have here been the assistant.

after the Restoration[1], the elements which probably secured its success on the stage are not such as to entitle it to the admiration of the reader. Hastily put together—so much so that the obsolete devices of chorus and dumb-show are resorted to in order to help the action on—it may be described as degrading by its treatment what might have proved a fine subject for a historical drama. The hero Dioclesian is made to act entirely under the influence of a benevolent witch; action and characters are alike theatrical only; and the best thing in the play is the humours of Geta—or Getianus, as he desires to be called after rising in life in the wake of his master Diocles[2].

Plays by Fletcher and others: Fletcher and William Rowley's The Maid in the Mill (1623).

In the authorship of the comedy of *The Maid in the Mill* (first acted 1623[3]), William Rowley was associated with Fletcher; and one is tempted to ascribe to the former a moralising tendency observable in passages of the play. As a whole, however, it is a work slight enough in texture as well as deficient in moral purpose—a weaker *Romeo and Juliet* in one of its plots, and a rather lame exemplification of maiden virtue in the other. Both are taken from novels; the former being a free adaptation of an episode in a Spanish romance already mentioned as a source of another of Fletcher's plays[4], the latter a slightly altered version of one of Bandello's tales[5]. But the disguise of Ismenia strikes one as dramatically futile; and the virtue of Florimel, the miller's daughter, is in the end rewarded in the very fashion in which that of Pamela is rewarded in

[1] It was reproduced in 1690 (as altered by Betterton the actor, with a prologue by Dryden which was immediately forbidden on account of the sneers against King William's Irish campaign; see Scott's *Dryden*, x. 406), and again on several occasions in the eighteenth century, down to 1784.

[2] See especially iii. 2, a capital scene, in which Geta 'dispenses justice' in his Edile's court.

[3] It was revived on the eve of the Restoration; a droll founded upon portions of it, called *The Surprise*, having been performed during the period of the suppression of the theatres.

[4] The *Gerardo* of Cespedes. Cf. *ante*, p. 215.

[5] Bandello's tale is also dramatised by Lope de Vega in his *La Quinta de Florencia*, a play according to Klein (x. 493) indisputably superior to Fletcher's.

Richardson's novel[1]. In details the play is disfigured by unusual coarseness, which can only be forgiven in the case of Florimel's supposed brother Bustofa, who is an excellent buffoon[2].

The Queen of Corinth (1616–19).

It is difficult not to agree with the conjecture of Weber and Dyce, that in the *Queen of Corinth*, produced between 1616 and 1619—in other words, after Beaumont's death—some other writer co-operated with Fletcher. There is no evidence to show who this was—hardly Massinger (though resemblances have been pointed out by Gifford between *The Queen of Corinth* and Massinger's *Old Law*); possibly, as Dyce thinks, William Rowley (who also had a hand in *The Old Law*), or, as Mr. Fleay thinks, Middleton. The play (which seems to have been hastily written, for dumb-show helps on the action in iv. 4) in any case presents a not very harmonious mixture of styles. The finest scenes (those in act ii. exhibiting the despair of the ravished Merione) must certainly be by Fletcher. The comic scenes are full of personal satire[3], a tendency not usually observable in Beaumont and Fletcher. Part of the first act (i. 2) drags with a dulness equally unusual in them. It is hardly necessary to add that the story of this play is wildly unhistorical. The statute of 'Lycurgus the Nineteenth' (v. 4) is particularly daring.

[1] *i.e.* the man who sought her love dishonourably weds her honourably,—and in the play she is additionally discovered not to be a miller's daughter at all.

[2] There is a probably accidental resemblance between a scene of this play (v. 2, the King's unwelcome visit to Otrante) and one in *The Loyal Subject* (ii. 6).

[3] Onos, the travelled dullard, and his uncle and tutor, who have accompanied him on the grand tour, is intended to ridicule Thomas Coryate, to whose well-known account of his journeys published in 1611 under the title of *Crudities hastily gobled vp in five Moneths Trauell in France, Savoy, Italy, &c.*, a direct allusion is made in iv. 1, where the 'fork-carving traveller' is ridiculed. (Coryate had observed in Italy, and practised in England, the custom of using a fork at dinner.) Satire against pretentious travellers is common enough in the Elisabethan as in later dramatists; but Fletcher or his coadjutor has seized with much humour on the besetting vice of *authors* of books of travels to record their personal experiences in such matters as eating and drinking as subjects of general interest. Onos, who never 'repented anything in his life' (iv. 1), goes off (v. 3) to recover the honour which he has lost in being humiliated by a page with whose master he had aspired to fight a duel, by means of a spell of thirty years' more travel.

The Bloody Brother (after 1624).

The Bloody Brother, or Rollo, Duke of Normandy (written, as appears from a passage in it, after the beginning of the year 1624[1]) is most assuredly the joint composition of Fletcher and some other author—most probably William Rowley. (Mr. Fleay conjectures Middleton). Passages in this play are written in Fletcher's most developed style[2]; others exhibit, besides an inelegance of diction often amounting to crabbedness, a versification such as Fletcher could hardly have adopted in this stage of his career. There is, moreover, a general unevenness in the execution of this certainly striking, but not thoroughly effective tragedy.

The opening of this play suggests many parallels in dramatic literature[3]. But it should be observed that only a small part of the action is comprised in the working of Rollo's jealousy against Otho, and in the murder of the younger by the elder brother. The character of the mother, Sophia, sinks into insignificance in the latter part of the play, which exhibits the fatal progress of the tyrant to the doom prepared for him by his ruthless ambition. His evil genius, Latorch, hurries him on to destruction, while his good counsellor, Aubrey, plays no very interesting part till he becomes himself the object of his enemy's murderous designs. Fletcher's earlier plays furnish

[1] A passage in the Cook's speech (ii. 2) is imitated, as Gifford pointed out, from Jonson's mask of *Neptune's Triumph*, performed on Twelfth-Night, 1624. *The Bloody Brother* was acted at Hampton Court, Jan. 24, 1637; and (besides a droll entitled *The Three Merry Boyes*, founded on the comic scenes between the Cook and his companions, whose gaiety stands them in so good stead on the scaffold—see their farcical songs, iii. 2—being acted during the period of the suppression of the theatres) it was one of the plays secretly performed at the Cockpit in the winter 1647-8. It was revived after the Restoration, and, according to Geneste, acted as late as 1608.

[2] I mention as signal instances, besides Edith's scene with Rollo (iii 1)—which Dyce pronounces the most *real* in its passionate earnestness of anything in Beaumont and Fletcher's writings—her speech, v. 2, and indeed the following dialogue between her and Rollo, thought by Seward to have been evidently written in emulation of *Richard III*, i. 2, to which it is incomparably inferior in subtlety of conception.

[3] Cf. vol. i. p. 108. Scott, who points out the resemblance of the story to the historical episode of Geta and Caracalla (see Gibbon, chap. vi), has (I think justly) taken exception to Dryden's praise of the plot of this play in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. (See Scott's *Dryden*, xv. 328.)

several instances of the honest plain-spoken counsellor far more effective than Aubrey. The resolution of Edith, the daughter of one of Rollo's victims, to become the instrument of his death, is insufficiently prepared by the previous action; and the same must be said of the scene (whether or not designed in rivalry of Shakspere) in which, while luring him on to his doom, she is all but diverted from her purpose by his persuasive eloquence. Rollo has not previously been exhibited in the character of a cunning hypocrite—except in his simulation of good-will during the banqueting scene. To season the interest of the tragedy, the author or authors have introduced a pack of astrologers (the names of some of whom under a thin disguise indicate actual personages of historical notoriety), as consulted by Latorch on the Duke's behalf, with the design of bringing about Aubrey's death by their warnings. This scene is written with a great display of learning and considerable drastic humour[1].

Of the lyrics in this play, one is thought to be Shakspere's; another, of a very different kind, has likewise attained to unusual popularity[2].

The False One (prob. after March 1619).

The False One (in the performance of which Burbadge took no part, and which was therefore probably produced after his death in March, 1619) appears, from the use of the plural 'we' in both Prologue and Epilogue, to have been written by more than one author. Weber thinks that Massinger assisted Fletcher in this play, and Mr. Fleay has arrived at the same conclusion; but is not the jolting character of many of the lines, so strangely mingled with some of Fletcher's peculiar characteristics as a writer of verse (trisyllabic endings of the lines are remarkably frequent), rather suggestive of William Rowley? The stern-

[1] iv. 2. Captain Bubb (De-Bube) and Fiske (La-Fiske) were connected with the Overbury murder; Bretnor (Norbret), who is also mentioned with Fiske in Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*, was likewise a real personage.

[2] As to the former ('Take, oh take those lips away,' v. 2) cf. vol. i. p. 409. The other (ii. 2) is the well-known 'Drink to-day, and drown all sorrow,' and ends with the lines

'And he that will go to bed sober
Falls with the leaf still in October.'

ness of some of the moralising would well accord with the supposition of Rowley's participation. But these are pure conjectures.

The authors in the Prologue guard themselves against any charge of having trodden once more ground already occupied by previous dramatists. Because they introduce Caesar they are not interfering with the laurels of the author of *Julius Cæsar*, or because they treat of Cleopatra, with those of the author of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The subject of this play is the early history of its heroine, her intrigue with Julius Caesar, and his danger and victory at Alexandria. This part of Cleopatra's story has not, to my knowledge, been treated by any other English dramatist, while her death has been made the subject of more than one tragedy[1]. I am, however, at a loss to see what, under these circumstances, justifies the title of the play; but I presume it must have reference in a general way to the wiles of the Serpent of old Nile, and not to any other of the characters of the drama, though Septimius might be held to have a good claim to the title.

Much of this play—the earlier parts especially, where the authors have freely welded into their work much of the glittering metal of Lucan's poetry—is very finely written[2]; and the exposition of the situation is singularly clear and impressive. The feeble King, between his wise counsellor Achoreus and his evil genius the eunuch Photinus, brings his doom upon himself by his cowardly policy of dishonesty and craft, while the murder of Pompeius deprives him of all our sympathy at the outset. But as the action progresses, stirringly enough in its details, to the close of the struggle between the star of Caesar and the ambition of Photinus, and to the victory of Caesar and of Cleopatra, we become aware of the shortcomings of the authors' dramatic

[1] Cf. vol. i. p. 427. The death of Pompeius is an incident in Chapman's *Cæsar and Pompey* (cf. *ante*, p. 15). Fletcher's play was adapted by Cibber, and produced in 1724 under the title of *Cæsar in Ægypt*, when his 'quavering Tragedy tunes' as Achoreus and the pasteboard swans, pulled along the Nile by the carpenters, furnished much amusement to some of the spectators. (Geneste, iii. 161.)

[2] It is, however, I think overpraised by Hazlitt.

power as compared with the task which they have set themselves. The Cleopatra of this play is merely a cunning beauty scheming at any cost for her own ends, while Caesar's greatness has to be taken for granted till the crisis of the action arrives. His passion for Cleopatra is not in any way harmonised with his greatness, or on the other hand represented as an aberration. There is no attempt to throw light either on the historical or on the moral problem suggested by the episode; and the amour excites no greater or less degree of interest than a hundred others in similar plays of this or later periods of our drama. Among the minor characters the rough frankness of Scaeva—one of those blunt soldiers who constantly reappear in Beaumont and Fletcher's plays—is well contrasted with the villanous baseness of Septimius, a Roman more degraded than the Egyptians, whose gold he takes first for scandal-mongering and then for murder. His fit of repentance, or assumption of it when he finds that his villany places him under a cloud, and his cheerful return to his sins when the prospects of the market brighten, are original features of much humour.

The spirited verses in the short mask introduced in iii. 4, descriptive of the gifts of the Nile, should not be overlooked.

The Lover's Progress.

The Lover's Progress (of uncertain date) is, in the form in which we possess it, clearly a play altered by another dramatist from a (probably complete) work of Fletcher's[1]. Who this dramatist was is uncertain; but the weight of opinion is in favour of Massinger.

In any case, this romantic drama, the subject of which is taken from a sufficiently complex French novel[2], pos-

[1] This, as Dyce observes, seems clearly indicated by the Prologue, which in the pleasing modesty of its tone (the author declares himself

'ambitious that it should be known
What's good was Fletcher's, and what ill his own')

offers a remarkable contrast to the usage of the dramatists of the decadence, who in general barely condescended to acknowledge having received a 'hint' after borrowing the better part of whole plays. *The Lovers' Progress* does not appear to have been acted after the Restoration.

[2] Daudiguier's *Lisander and Calista*, printed anonymously under the title of

sesses, together with merits which it shares with other of Fletcher's plays, a purity and elevation of sentiment by no means habitual to him. In this powerful drama is exhibited a moral conflict worthy of any poet's pen, while two of the tenderest of human emotions, love and friendship, are here presented under their noblest aspect. I know of no more touching dramatic conception in Fletcher than that of Calista's and Lysander's struggle between passion and duty, —and certainly of none equally noble. The scene (iii. 2) in which Lysander's self-control all but gives way, while Calista's virtue withstands even the trembling in the balance of her lover's honour, is truly powerful, and forms the real climax in the moral conflict of the drama. At the same time the play has its weak points. The wrath of the lascivious Clarinda on being upbraided by her virtuous mistress, whom she has in her power, is perhaps too weak a pivot for the plot to turn upon; while the apparition after death of mine host, who promises to warn Cleander of the approach of his last hour, is as oddly incongruous as any 'actual experience' of the kind ever adduced in proof of the existence of a sixth sense. These things apart, the drama is equally effective in its action and lofty in its sentiment; and the moral earnestness implied in the main conception of the work, must therefore be placed to Fletcher's credit. Nor is it easy to dissociate the fervent picture of friendship between men which this play as well as *The Two Noble Kinsmen* presents, from the fact that Fletcher's name is itself so intimately connected with that of a faithful friend.

Fletcher and Shirley's The Night-Walker (after Aug. 1625).

The Night-Walker, or The Little Thief (known to have been acted at court early in 1634) is officially mentioned as a play of Fletcher's corrected by Shirley. Whether it is to be regarded as a piece left unfinished by Fletcher and completed in its present form by Shirley, or as a version by the latter of an earlier and lost drama by the former, entitled *The Devil of Dowgate, or Usury Put to Use*, can hardly be determined; but I greatly doubt the second of these

Histoire tragi-comique de notre temps in 1615. An English translation appeared in 1627. See the abridgment in Dyce, vol. xi.

hypotheses[1]. *The Night-Walker* seems to have been popular after the Restoration[2].

This comedy, though moral in purpose, is the reverse of pleasing in execution. Its plot, so far as it refers to Maria, is a mixture of ghastliness and farce[3]; while it can hardly be thought a happy contrivance to wed the usurer Algripe to the heroine of the piece, Alathe, whose tricks as the Little Thief bring him to repentance. There is a tone of coarseness in this comedy which almost seems to attest a further decay of manners than that observable even in the most offensive of Fletcher's comedies; but it must be allowed that there is considerable humour in some of the comic scenes, especially in those (clearly written or re-written by Shirley[4]) in which the literary pursuits of Algripe's servants cause his house to be left unprotected.

The Little French Lawyer (1616 or *post?*).

The Little French Lawyer (of unknown date) has been variously assigned to Fletcher and Beaumont, and Fletcher and Massinger. The latter conjecture is Mr. Fleay's, who supports it by a comparison of the versification, which, while abounding throughout in double endings, differs in the matter of stopped and unstopped lines in accordance with the supposed division of the plot between the two authors[5]. Of the main plot the less said the better; it is an adaptation of a story in Aleman's vagabond prose-epic of *Guzman de Alfarache*, as reproduced in other novels. The demands of propriety are however satisfied in so far as a moral turn is given to the developement of the relation between Lamira and Dinant.

[1] See Dyce, i. lxx, and note y. Why should Shirley have adapted a piece in such a way as to omit (apparently) all reference to its popular source?

[2] It was acted in 1682, and again in 1705.

[3] Her disguise as a Welsh serving-girl recalls that of Luce as a 'Dutch frow' in *The London Prodigal* (cf. vol. i p. 460).

[4] This is proved by the reference in iii. 4 to Prynne's *Histriomastix*, which was not printed till 1633. The previous scene is curious as showing the nature of the popular books and ballads of the day (Lurcher and Alathe appear as book-hawkers).

[5] Mr. Fleay finds that in every place where Dinant's name occurs in the scenes assigned to Fletcher, it is pronounced Dínant; but in the scenes ascribed by him to Massinger, Dinánt. This undoubtedly makes for a joint authorship of some kind.

The humour of the play lies in its satirical reference to the mania for quarrels of honour which had risen to its height—or perhaps (see a speech of Cleremont's in i. 1) had just passed it—in the age in which the comedy appeared. A duelling atmosphere, so to speak, envelopes the entire action from the first scene onwards, where Cleremont preaches moderation in the practice to his friend, but concedes that there are half-a-dozen species of cases in which a gentleman who has a sword

> 'may use it
> To the cutting of a rascal's throat or so,
> Like a good christian.'

But the humorous application of the moral is conveyed in the character who gives his name to the piece—the lawyer La-Writ, who being accidentally constrained to become a second in a duel, imbibes a terrible love of the practice from his equally accidental success, and under the influence of his new-fledged valour abandons his clients and challenges the judge who has cast their suit in the absence of the advocate. Finally, he is beaten back into his senses, and (not having been disbarred) resumes the more usual weapons of his profession. The character, though of course it touches on the borders of farce, is full of fun; and the moral which from this point of view the piece conveys doubtless needed enforcement. This comedy, which is throughout written with great spirit, contains several humorous quotations from Shakspere.

The Nice Valour, or The Passionate Madman (1624 or *post*).

The Nice Valour, or The Passionate Madman was certainly not acted before 1624, the year before that of Fletcher's death[1], and may very probably, as Dyce suggests, have been altered by some other hand from the form in which it was left by Fletcher. The play has an unfinished aspect; nor is there any other reason why so many of the characters should have been left without names—a circumstance which by no means renders it easier to follow a not very perspicuous plot. The con-

[1] A pamphlet called *Fisher's Folly*, mentioned in v. 3, was first printed in 1624.

ception of the comedy is happier than its execution. Chamont, the hero, is a man of the most passionate sense of honour, who can brook an insult from neither foe nor friend, not even from his sovereign himself, though the insult be a mere trifle and the Duke's good-will towards him is great. But though there is some spirit in the conception, and some graceful ingenuity in the way in which Chamont is in the end appeased by the Duke, the developement of the character must be described as a failure, inasmuch as Chamont's pride is neither sufficiently ridiculous to be comic, nor sufficiently free from exaggeration to warrant sympathy. The Passionate Lord (who recalls Chatillion in *The Noble Gentleman*) and the unhappy lady who seeks to reclaim him by personating Cupid (under circumstances as inappropriate as those under which Madame Melina in *Wilhelm Meister* personated Minerva) are not peculiarly interesting. The comic foil to the proud sensitiveness of Chamont is supplied by Lapet and his servant Galoshio[1], both of whom are of accord in their resolution to take the kicks the world provides them. The humours of these worthies are elaborated at an almost tedious length; but they are worth noting, both on account of the fun which they in part at least furnish and as illustrating clearly enough Fletcher's opinion as to the value of the social safeguard of a nice sense of honour, which he and other dramatists are so fond of ridiculing when carried to excess[2].

Notice should be taken in this play of the famous lyric which may have suggested to Milton the idea of his *Penseroso*, and which certainly suggested some of its phraseology[3].

[1] Galoshio 'has not his name for nought—he' is much 'trod upon' (iv. 1); the master, who would not be a gentleman at all except that his wife insisted on his buying a coat of arms at the Heralds' College,—

'as women love these heralds' kickshaws naturally,'—

has reduced his cowardice to a system, and is author of a work entitled

'The Uprising of the Kick
And the Downfall of the Duello.'

[2] The scene (v. 3) in which Lapet distributes copies of his tractate is interesting as showing what was the popular reading of the day which 'much enriched the company of stationers.'

[3] iii. 3: '*The* Passionate Lord *sings:*

The Elder Brother (acted after Aug. 1625).

The Elder Brother is unhesitatingly pronounced by Dyce to be by Fletcher only (not acted till after his death [1]). Unless he was acquainted with a comedy by Calderon, said in many respects to bear a most striking resemblance to *The Elder Brother* [2], this excellent play may be described as an original work. Written with extreme spirit, and containing many passages of great beauty of language, it is distinguished by a power of characterisation less usual in Fletcher's works. Charles, the elder of the two sons of Brisac, is despised as a bookworm by his father, who has resolved to make his younger son Eustace his heir, and at the same time to secure to him the hand of the fair Angelina. For this transaction the consent of the student himself is necessary; but the power of love, awakened by the sight of Angelina, reveals the fact that Charles is brave and manly at heart. He refuses to renounce so fair a prize; and—this is admirably conceived—it is his valour which inspires his brother Eustace, hitherto an empty-headed courtier, with similar courage. The rivalry of the brothers ends in their jointly rescuing Angelina from the consequences of her father's anger; and the action thus comes to a pleasing close. The character of

> Hence, all you vain delights,
> As short as are the nights
> Wherein you spend your folly!
> There's nought in this life sweet,
> If man were wise to see't,
> But only melancholy;
> Oh, sweetest melancholy,' &c.

Cf. Masson's *Life of Milton*, i. 533. Mr. Masson there indicates what is undoubtedly the real idea of Milton's poem—or rather, for *Il Penseroso* cannot be separated from *L'Allegro*, of the two poems. They are, I think, to be regarded rather as pictures illustrating a truth of mental philosophy, than as lyrical effusions proper. One would be reminded by Fletcher's lyric of Rogers' rather namby-pamby

> 'There's such a charm in melancholy,
> I would not, if I could, be gay,'

were it not that Fletcher's song is in intention dramatic, which Rogers' lines are not.

[1] Mr. Fleay, however, holds the first act to be by Massinger.—Cibber's prose-comedy of *Love Makes a Man, or The Fop's Fortune* (1701) is founded partly on this comedy, partly on *The Custom of the Country*.

[2] *viz. De una Causa dos Efectos.*

Miramont, the uncle of the brothers, who respects learning without possessing it [1], who takes Charles's part when he is despised, and is only reconciled to Eustace when he finds that he too is a youth of mettle, is very original and fresh; nor is there anything unpleasing in the piece except the coarseness of its bye-plot, though here too moral justice is done.

The writing of this play is, even among Fletcher's works, so signally fine that it may justly be regarded as one of his happiest efforts in high comedy, though probably one of his very last works [2].

Fletcher and Shirley's Love's Pilgrimage (after 1625).

Love's Pilgrimage (which appears to have been acted in 1636) is stated by Malone, on the authority of Sir Henry Herbert's MS., to have been 'corrected and finished by Shirley.' It is probable that to Shirley was owing the insertion in a scene of this play [3] of passages (more or less altered) from Ben Jonson's *New Inn*. As the Prologue speaks of more than one author, it has been thought that the comedy was originally written by Fletcher and Massinger; but this view seems unsupported by internal evidence.

The comic element in this play is slight—though there is some humour in the bailiff Incubo, who does the honours of the tavern and is ready to talk politics and eat and drink (not at his own expense) with any stranger. The main action of the plot, which is taken from one of Cervantes'

[1] 'I have a learnèd faith, sir,
And that 's it makes a gentleman of my sort.
Though I can speak no Greek, I love the sound on't' &c. (ii. 1.)

[2] The 'awakening' of Charles is charming (iii. 3):

'Andrew, she has a face looks like a story;
The story of the heavens looks very like her'—

a passage which some commentators have attempted to improve into commonplace. See also some truly poetical touches in iii. 5 and iv. 3. The passage in which Louis describes the ordinary habits of a woman of fashion (i. 1) may be compared with Davies' description of the habits of a man of fashion (quoted in vol. i. p. 261, *note*); see especially the close:

'And so your life runs round
Without variety or action, daughter.'

[3] *viz.* near the beginning, and the dialogue between Diego and Lazaro at the close of i. 1.

Novelas Exemplares[1], though treated perhaps with some degree of lengthiness, is interesting. It is in fact the history of what some modern satirist has described as a 'male flirt,' an intolerable species of humanity, but unfortunately a common enough bane of society. Marc-Antonio's contempt for women prevents his being faithful, but does not prevent his engaging in amours—as indeed he confesses in the scene (ii. 3) in which he expounds his shallow philosophy. Thus he has brought woe to two fair maidens whom he has promised to marry, but deserted at the last moment, and who are now both (disguised in male attire) disconsolate wanderers. Fate brings them together; and in a dramatically very effective scene (iii. 2) Theodosia listens to Leocadia's narrative of an experience identical with her own. At Barcelona[2] accident brings Marc-Antonio into their presence, and after he has been repulsed in an attempt to begin an intrigue with a married woman, he at last repents, and a solution is arrived at. The play is undoubtedly one of Fletcher's more successful efforts in this species of comedy, though, as is usual with him, it lacks true elevation of moral tone, in spite of its decidedly moral purpose.

The Fair Maid of the Inn (acted 1626).

The Fair Maid of the Inn (acted in 1626) is a posthumous comedy by Fletcher, perhaps finished by some other hand. The admirably written opening scenes, which place the situation very clearly before the reader, are not followed by an action either symmetrical in its progress or very effective in its execution. The character of Cesario, fresh and spirited in the earlier scenes, becomes tame and contemptible after misfortune has fallen upon him; and though (with the exception of one pathetic passage, iv. 1) there is nothing specially interesting about Bianca, the supposed inn-keeper's daughter, one feels throughout that she is too good for Cesario. The truth is, that neither in the conduct of this part of the plot, nor in the management of Mariana's discovery, has Fletcher

[1] *Las dos Doncellas.*

[2] The historical character of Barcelona ('Oh the quiet hurly-burlies I have seen in this town, when we have fought for hours together, and not one amongst us so impertinent or modest to ask why?' iv. 1) is happily hit off.

shown his usual skill in using the novelistic materials out of which he has constructed his play[1]. Indeed, I doubt whether, without the aid of a sketch of the novel from which the story of Mariana and the Duke's judgment is taken, the reader will form a very clear idea of the meaning of this part of the action. The comic portions of this play, of which the central figure is the mountebank Forobosco with his attendant clown, are far more elaborate than is usual with Fletcher; and in their abundance of allusions to contemporary fashions and follies are to some degree in the manner of Jonson, more than one of whose plays may be illustrated by the help of passages in this comedy[2]. Were it not that this is a posthumous work, and very possibly may have been left unfinished by Fletcher, it would have to be regarded as an effort not wholly successful in either construction or execution, and as an exception to his usual facility in both respects.

The Two Noble Kinsmen (pr. 1634).

The Two Noble Kinsmen was, according to its publisher's of 1634 and the opinion of several critics, written conjointly by Fletcher and Shakspere (see on this head vol. i. p. 466)[3]. Sceptical as I remain with regard to this statement, I am the more anxious to advert to the many beauties of this 'tragi-comedy,' as it originally appears to have been called, doubtless because of its (imperfectly) 'happy ending.' For the comic element is very slight, being in the main confined to a scene (iii. 5), which is not without reminiscences both of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and more particularly of *Love's Labour's Lost*, the schoolmaster Gerrold being evidently a copy of Holofernes. The main story

[1] These were,—for the episode of Mariana, a transcription in Wanley's *History of Man* of a story related by Causin in his *Holy Court;* for the story of Bianca, the fair Maid of the Inn (not closely followed by Fletcher), *La Illustre Fregonda*, one of the *Novelas Exemplares* of Cervantes. Two Spanish comedies are stated to be founded on the same novel.

[2] See in particular iv. 2, with the parallel passages in *The Alchemist* and *The Staple of News* noted by the editors.—In iii. 1 the Host and Hostess review Bianca's 'paragraphistical suitors' after the fashion of Portia and Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice*, and of several similar scenes in other plays.

[3] An alteration of this play was produced in 1664 under the title of *The Rivals*, and has been attributed to D'Avenant.

is of course that of Chaucer's *Knightes Tale;* but though the divergences in the plot are slight, there are other differences of far greater significance. Chaucer's poem was founded on the *Teseida* of Boccaccio, but it is by no means a translation (for of the lines composing it only an eighth or less are stated to be translated from the original). The drama inevitably reduces the length in time of the action; it omits (likewise inevitably) many of the vivid descriptions in the poem (*e.g.* that of the three temples and much of the tournament), and discreetly abbreviates the conduct of the catastrophe. The supernatural machinery (skilfully enough interwoven with the action by Chaucer) it leaves aside altogether, except in the incidents of the temple-scenes (v. 1–3). On the other hand, it substitutes for Chaucer's in itself very striking description of the two cousins silently arming one another for their mutual combat, a most effective dialogue between them (iii. 6). What is of more importance, the drama developes with greater fulness the character of Emily, which Chaucer treats rather lightly[1]; and introduces the entirely new and exceedingly pathetic character of the Jailor's Daughter, whose unrequited love liberates Palamon from prison. The earlier scenes in which the poor child discloses her hopeless but irresistible passion are very touching; and her first loss of reason is very powerfully depicted; though afterwards (not to speak of too obvious reminiscences of Ophelia) this episode is drawn out at too great length and in the end degraded. The play abounds in beauties of detail, and as a whole is a most successful solution of the difficult problem of converting an epos into a drama, chiefly by the proper means of elaborating the characterisation. The close is as unsatisfactory in the drama as in the poem; indeed more so in the former than in the latter, for Chaucer's philosophy helps to reconcile us to the unequal fates of the two kinsmen as a matter of destiny.

[1] In one passage, indeed, with a genial cynicism not unusual to him, when in a mood of 'heresie ayenst the law' of Love:

> 'For women, as to speken in commune,
> They folwen all the favour of fortune.'

Palamon should have killed himself over Arcite's corpse, and Emily resumed her vows of virginity [1].

The Laws of Candy.

The Laws of Candy (of unknown date) was formerly regarded as a joint work of Beaumont and Fletcher. Dyce however regards the question as undecided, and on grounds of versification also the authorship of this play may be considered doubtful. It is a romantic drama of no exceptional power—such merits as it possesses consisting chiefly in the ingenious rather than interesting contrivance of the plot. The laws of Candy (*i. e.* Candia, Crete), which give their name to the play, are briefly these (see i. 1): the one, that whoever can convict another person of ingratitude for a benefit received from him may, unless he is himself willing to remit the penalty, demand the offender's life; the other, that the warrior whose services in the field have by the voice of the army been approved the best, may demand his own reward on his return home. Of these laws, the latter furnishes the knot of the play, in the jealousy of a father against his son. (This part of the action is founded on a novel in the *Hecatommithi* of Giraldi Cinthio, x. 9.) The other law, by a species of *ad absurdum* application of it, brings the action to a close. The characters are however hardly of a nature deeply to interest the reader; the best is perhaps that of Gonzalo, the intriguing Venetian magnifico whose craft is in the end completely outwitted.

The Faithful Friends.

The Faithful Friends, attributed to Beaumont and Fletcher in an entry on the Stationers' books of the year 1660, was not printed till the present century, from an original MS., which finally passed into the possession of Mr. Dyce, and served as the basis of his edition of the play. Mr. Dyce thinks Beaumont's authorship very doubtful, while Weber conjectures that Beaumont may have

[1] It may be added that a play on the subject of *Palamon and Arcite*, by Richard Edwards, was acted before Queen Elisabeth, as early as 1566. A play with the same title is mentioned by Henslowe in 1594. While the play before us has been ascribed to the co-operation of Shakspere and Fletcher, one critic, who in my opinion greatly underrates its merits, is not inclined to believe that either of these poets was concerned in it. (See Rapp, *Englisches Theater*, p. 90.) Mr. Charles Knight thought that he had discovered in Chapman a resemblance to certain passages in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

written part of the play, the rest being contributed by an inferior assistant. In any case the conclusion of Dyce (virtually shared by Weber) that Fletcher had no hand in the play commends itself to general acceptance.

This romantic drama, by whomsoever it was written, is a spirited and stirring production, though of a by no means exceptional type. Its plot is a David-and-Urias intrigue playing at the court of Titus Martius, King of Rome, and in the country of the Sabines; but historical names were never dealt with in a spirit of more reckless freedom than in this instance. The characterisation is vigorous rather than subtle, as in the case of the villain of the piece, Rufinus, while Titus Martius recalls the King in *The Maid's Tragedy*. Passages of considerable beauty occur[1]; but the comic scenes, of which the braggart knight Sir Pergamus and his dwarf Dindimus are the heroes, are not distinguished by much original humour[2]. The character of Laelia, who accompanies Tullius to the wars as a page (oddly called Janus), falls short of the pathos with which Fletcher would have invested her.

Other extant and non-extant plays connected with the names ofBeaumont or Fletcher.

The comedy of *The Widow* (written at the end of 1615 or the beginning of 1616[3], and attributed in the quarto of 1652 to Jonson, Fletcher, and Middleton) has been already noticed among Middleton's works[4].

Massinger's *A Very Woman* is regarded by Mr. Dyce (with whom Mr. Fleay, on the evidence of versification, agrees) as a *rifacimento* of a play called *A Right Woman*, which was entered on the Stationers' books in 1660 as

[1] See particularly the very fine description of Philadelpha dancing (iv. 3). It may be noted that in i. 1 occurs an allusion of a nature not elsewhere ventured upon in Beaumont and Fletcher's plays:

> 'Alexander the Great had his Hephaestion,
> Philip of Spain his Lerma; *not to offend,*
> *I could produce from courts that I have seen*
> *More royal precedents.*'

[2] The notion is however good of his hanging up his arms in the temple of Mars (iv. 5).

[3] Mrs. Turner's execution, alluded to in the mention of 'yellow bonds' (v. 1), took place in November 1615; and a passage in iv. 2 is imitated in a play, *The Honest Lawyer*, printed in 1616.

[4] *Ante*, p. 89.

Beaumont and Fletcher's, together with *The History of Mador King of Britain*, described as by Beaumont only. A play acted at court in 1613 under the title of *The History of Cardenio* (taken from the story in *Don Quixote*), and entered in the Stationers' books in 1653 as the joint work of Fletcher and Shakspere, has apparently not been printed[1]. Reference is made in a document addressed to Henslowe to a play by Fletcher, Field, Massinger, and Daborne, which has been conjectured to be *The Jeweller of Amsterdam, or The Hague*, entered on the Stationers' books in 1651 as by the first three of these dramatists. In 1623 Fletcher's *The Devil of Dowgate, or Usury Put to Use* (which Weber has conjectured to have been the play originally written by Fletcher and altered by Shirley under the title of *The Night-Walker*), and in the same year Fletcher's *The Wandering Lovers*, were licensed. A play was entered under the same title as by Massinger in 1653; and it is therefore conjectured that these two were the same piece, a joint composition of both dramatists. This appears to exhaust the known names of any dramatic productions connected with the names of Fletcher and the associate of his earlier labours for the stage.

Beaumont and Fletcher's facile productivity.

The first observation which naturally occurs to any reader of the whole of the extant dramatic works of Beaumont and Fletcher is an expression of amazement at the productive power of these authors. Under their hands tragic and comic themes seem to mould themselves with equal facility into the dramatic form; nor is there, unless it be in the very earliest of the works attributed to them[2], the slightest indication of any labour in production.

Only to some extent accounted for by their birth and breeding.

It would certainly be a very inadequate explanation of such a phenomenon to regard Beaumont and Fletcher in the light of gentlemen who wrote at ease, and whose genius was innocent of any thought of taking trouble. In the

[1] It has been thought by some to have been the play published as Shakspere's by Theobald in 1728 under the title of *The Double Falsehood, or, The Distrest Lovers*. Dyce, following Farmer, thinks this play (which appeared much blotted by Theobald) not to be the *Cardenio* of 1613, but a play by Shirley.

[2] *The Woman-Hater*.

first place, had they been mere *dilettanti* of this description, their condescending to authorship would not have carried them far. In their own age, indeed, the Sir John Daws might have respected them as 'of the wits that write verses, and yet are no poets,' instead of contemptuously ranking them among those that 'are poets that live by it, the poor fellows that live by it[1].' The 'jeerers,' like Dr. Almanac, might have judged them 'no great scholars; they write like gentlemen[2];' and Ben Jonson himself might bitterly have reckoned their success as another proof that 'they who have saluted Poetry on the by, and now and then tendered their visits, she hath done much for, and advanced in the way of their own professions,' while her 'old clients, or honest servants,' are 'bound by their place to write and starve[3].' But there is no trace of any affectation of the kind in Beaumont and Fletcher; and as to the latter at least it is manifest that he worked for his bread, like Thomas Heywood or like Shakspere himself. What facility Beaumont and Fletcher possessed was not due to anything unusual in the outward conditions of their dramatic authorship.

On the other hand, they were no doubt both born in the upper ranks of society, both well educated, and both in their earlier days at least—and Beaumont through life—in familiar contact with the easier conditions of intercourse and conversation at all times prevailing among those gently born and bred. For particular branches of their art they had thus undergone a training which it is at all times difficult to acquire by study or observation from the outside; and in addressing particular classes of their public they were thus at the outset likely to be in surer and more instinctive sympathy with their audience.

Beaumont and Fletcher fortunate in the period of the beginnings of their careers.

A very much greater importance, however, attaches to the fact that the beginnings of their careers as dramatists fell in a period when the dramatic art of their predecessors already furnished them with examples of consummate excellence. On the threshold of their literary lives we find

[1] *The Staple of News* (iv. 1). [2] *Epicoene* (ii. 1).
[3] *Discoveries* (*Censura de poetis*).

both of them as friends and admirers of Ben Jonson, some at least of whose masterpieces must in date of production have preceded their earliest dramatic efforts. Of his manner their plays are by no means without reminiscences; while the experience of the most painstaking and the most conscientious of our Elisabethan dramatists could not fail to apprise them of much that it was desirable to follow and of some things that it was advisable to avoid. A familiar acquaintance on their part with Shakspere's plays, of which the great majority were already before the world when they began to write, was equally a matter of course; and is incontestably proved by an abundance of conscious or unconscious quotations, allusions, or reminiscences[1]. Beaumont and Fletcher had therefore before their eyes the best models of effective dramatic composition on the national stage, and might deem themselves separated by a long interval from the infancy of the Elisabethan drama. To its early works their own bear no resemblance; and productions of a later date deferring to what these poets deem an obsolete taste they ridicule as with a conscious sense of superiority[2].

Range and sources of their subjects.

The experience of which Beaumont and Fletcher were thus able to avail themselves, together with the resources opened to them by the more liberal course of education which they had doubtless enjoyed, furnished them with an unusually wide range of subjects for dramatic treatment. For subjects indeed they seem never to have been at a loss. Their tastes did not lead them in the direction of the national history; for the historic drama as it had been begun by Shakspere's predecessors and elaborated by

[1] Some of these passages and phrases, most of which have been noted by the editors, occur in *The Loyal Subject* (i. 3); *Valentinian* (iii. 1); *The Humorous Lieutenant* (iii. 2); *Bonduca* (iii. 1); *The Captain* (ii. 1); *The Lover's Progress* (iii. 3); *A King and No King* (iii. 1); *Love's Pilgrimage* (i. 2); besides quotations of a parodistic character in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Induction); *The Woman's Prize* (v. 3); *The Scornful Lady* (ii. 1); *The Beggar's Bush* (ii. 1). —Incidentally, it may be noted that Beaumont and Fletcher, like Shakspere, are remarkably fond of metaphors taken from the art of falconry.

[2] See *The Knight of the Burning Pestle.* Passages in *The Spanish Tragedy* are of course parodied by Beaumont and Fletcher, as by nearly every other of the later Elisabethans.

Shakspere himself they had little liking; and the chronicler in whom Shakspere had been content to find materials, Fletcher on one occasion mentions with undisguised contempt[1]. Nor again, where they use materials of ancient history, are they, like Shakspere, content with the solitary authority of Plutarch; but, though abstaining from honest Ben Jonson's display of learning, exhibit a tolerably wide range of classical reading[2]. They had resort to sources of French history[3] likewise; but it is not in these directions that they principally made use of such reading as they possessed.

Italian novels.

The Italian novelists lay open to them in the same translations as to Shakspere; but except Fletcher's imitation of Guarini, a reminiscence of an episode in Ariosto, and the borrowing of part of a plot from Cinthio[4], I am not aware of any evidence of their having resorted to Italian literature directly. With Spanish literature their acquaintance has always been supposed to have been intimate; but I am not sure whether too much has not been taken for granted on this head.

Spanish novels.

Montemayor's *Diana* (which was probably known to the authors of *Philaster*) had been translated (1598). But many of Beaumont and Fletcher's plots are borrowed from the novels of Cervantes; and of these—both of the *Don Quixote*, which they imitated in their *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and of the *Novelas Exemplares*, to which they had constant recourse—it is clear that they made the acquaintance in the original[5]. A not unfrequent use of Spanish phrases

[1] See *The Elder Brother* (ii. 1), where the following is put into the mouth of Miramont, the old gentleman who, be it observed, in spite of his imperfect education, has a respect for sound learning:

'Thou art an ass, then,
A dull old tedious ass; thou 'rt ten times worse,
And of less credit, than dunce Hollingshed,
The Englishman, that writes of shows and sheriffs.'

[2] Compare *Anthony and Cleopatra* with *The False One*, which shows an intimate acquaintance with Lucan, as *Bonduca* does with Tacitus.

[3] *Thierry and Theodoret.*

[4] See *The Faithful Shepherdess*; *The Sea-Voyage*; *The Laws of Candy.*

[5] *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is expressly stated to have been the 'elder of a yeare' of Don Quixote (*i. e.* of Shelton's translation, 1612). No other

Whether Spanish plays?

in several plays[1] would also seem to imply a more or less familiar knowledge of the Spanish tongue. On the other hand, it is singular that Beaumont and Fletcher should, so far as I can gather, have borrowed little or nothing from the Spanish drama directly. It is necessary to speak on this subject with diffidence; but what attention I have been able to give to it, inclines me to the conclusion that Beaumont and Fletcher knew little or nothing of the plays of Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and their contemporaries. Neither plots nor characters can be traced to these sources; and where it would have been almost impossible for them, had they read, not to borrow, they do not seem to have done so[2]. It should moreover be remembered that no plays by Cervantes were published till 1615, while those of Lope published with his own consent did not, so far as we know, appear before 1619[3], by which time Beaumont had been dead three years, and Fletcher's manner as a dramatist had long been fully formed.

Under these circumstances it may seem of less moment than is at times assumed to consider the character of the contemporary Spanish drama in its relation to the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher and their contemporaries, inasmuch as there is no reason to suppose that either dramatic literature at this period directly influenced the other to any considerable extent. At the same time, the relations between

tales of Cervantes appears to have been translated into English before 1640 (cf. Ticknor, ii. 123).

[1] *e. g. Love's Cure.*

[2] Cf. G. H. Lewes, *The Spanish Drama* (1846): 'We must not exaggerate the extent of this acquaintance with the Spanish Drama.... We have every reason to believe the novelists to have been the great filters through which these imitations have been strained.' I have arrived at the conclusion stated above after an examination of the analyses of the plays of the Spanish dramatists in question in the ninth and tenth volumes of Klein's elaborate work. I can hardly think that had the authors of *The Scornful Lady* been acquainted with Lope's *Los Milagros del Desprecio*, they would have failed to betray the fact. So again the madhouse-scenes in *The Pilgrim* may be compared with those in the same author's *Los Locos de Valencia*, without the conclusion being likely to be arrived at that the scenes in the English play were suggested by the Spanish. Cf. Klein, x. 210; ix. 568; and see some further remarks on the general subject of the influence of Spanish upon English dramatic literature, *infra.*

[3] Ticknor, ii. 124; 203, *note.*

Spanish and English life were probably closer in this period than in any other; and through personal contact as well as through the literature of Spanish novels, Spanish tastes and ways of thought, such as find their expression in the drama of Lope and his contemporaries, no doubt affected the English stage. Lope's object as a dramatist was avowedly not to follow any models of his art, but to gratify the tastes of the audiences for whom he wrote[1]; a survey of his plays accordingly presents the most extraordinary medley of species[2], to all of which he applied himself with the same facility, without exhibiting any strong intellectual preference for the one over the other. Of these, apart from the *Comedias Pastoriles*, to which Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* corresponds, the *Comedia Heroica* (or *Historial*) and the *Comedia de Capa y Espada* seem to offer the nearest analogies to the species principally affected by Beaumont and Fletcher. The latter in particular furnishes a parallel to their favourite kind of productions. 'It took its name,' says the English historian of Spanish literature[3], 'from the circumstance that its principal personages belong to the genteel portion of society, accustomed, in Lope's time, to the picturesque national dress of cloaks and swords[4]. . . . Its main and moving principle is gallantry—such gallantry as existed in the time of the author. The story is almost always involved and intriguing, and almost always accompanied with an under-plot and parody on the characters and adventures of the principal parties, formed out of those of the servants and other inferior personages.' Except in the case of this last detail, which was not till afterwards to become the wearisome inheritance of the modern stage in general, this description applies to a large number of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays. The double plot is with them almost a *sine qua non*, though it is not usually

Beaumont and Fletcher and Lope de Vega.

[1] Ticknor, ii. 205.

[2] See the classification given by the Spanish critic Don Alberto Lista and quoted by Klein, ix. 636, *note*. A useful prose translation of selected plays by Lope has recently been published by M. Eug. Baret.

[3] Ticknor, ii. 207.

[4] The custom of wearing swords was being discontinued in England; as appears from Fletcher's reprobating their disuse. See *The Elder Brother*, ii. 1; and *The Custom of the Country*, ii. 3, cited by Dyce.

of the kind favoured by Lope, but frequently devoid of any real connexion with the main plot. The tragedies of Beaumont and Fletcher have less special resemblance to those of Lope with which I am acquainted. His 'philosophical' or 'ideal' comedies[1], the species which Calderon afterwards elaborated to perfection, are a purely Spanish growth.

The curious phenomenon seems thus established that Lope, who was virtually the father of the Spanish drama, arrived at results corresponding in some important points to the productions of writers who, like Beaumont and Fletcher, stand in the middle of an active national growth. It is only another proof of the truth that in authors, and more especially in dramatic authors, lacking original genius of the highest order, the tastes and tendencies of an age assert their influence. In artistic purpose neither Beaumont and Fletcher on the one hand, nor Lope de Vega on the other, were as dramatists far elevated above the audiences which they addressed.

I have no wish to carry the comparison any further, and confine myself in what follows to the English dramatists.

Their original popularity in part explained by their agreement with their times.

Beaumont and Fletcher's extraordinary popularity in their own age, though in part no doubt based on enduring merits, is to a great degree explicable by the fact that they suited themselves so easily to the tastes and tendencies of that age itself.

It was the reverse of a great age for which they wrote. The reaction which is wont to follow upon a period of national effort was at work; and the miserable rule of James I, while it prevented the better aspirations of the nation from finding their desired outlet, deadened every noble impulse in the hearts of the younger generation. The loyalty with which Queen Elisabeth had been looked up to as the incarnation of the nation's greatness could hardly be offered to her successor; its place was taken by an ossified abstract sentiment, whatever tribute the King and the political doctors of the right divine might claim as due to the patriarchal principle of government, and whatever incense he might accept as fitly offered to

[1] '*La filosofica ó ideal.*' Lista, *ap.* Klein, *in loc. cit.*

his personal wisdom. If any one wishes to understand the depth of the division which was silently forming itself in the nation, and the bitterness of the wrath with which men of a freer spirit were beginning to look upon the servility of the Court and its surroundings, he cannot do better than consider what the sentiment of loyalty signifies in the mouths of such writers as Beaumont and Fletcher, who unconsciously testify to the sentiments of the audiences for which they wrote. It consists of an unfaltering belief in the sanctity of a King's person and of a King's rights, as superior to all other considerations—a belief such as only befits men born and contented to live as slaves[1].

Their moral defects.

Equally in harmony with the spirit of the worst Court that ever disgraced England is the lasciviousness which is the worst stain on Beaumont and Fletcher's poetic fame. On this subject it is unnecessary to waste any words; but it may perhaps be worth pointing out that as a rule these writers seem devoid of the conception of female purity, which is a poet's solitary safeguard against his becoming the thrall of his own imagination[2]. In *The Faithful Shepherdess* Fletcher indulges in an utterly artificial fancy of a love purged from all earthly elements; in most of the other plays (*Philaster* being perhaps the most noteworthy exception) these earthly elements absorb the passion of which the plays of these poets are full. The moral grossness of Beaumont and Fletcher is a far more grievous sign of the times for which they wrote than their occasional indecency. Nominally, indeed, they pay every

[1] If these expressions be thought too strong, I beg the reader to refer to *Valentinian* (i. 3), not as a solitary, but as the most striking, example of Fletcher's (or Beaumont and Fletcher's) political views. It was after marking this passage for the purpose, that I found in Coleridge's *Remains* (ii. 308) the remark that 'it is a real trial of charity to read this scene with tolerable temper towards Fletcher. So very slavish—so reptile—are the feelings and sentiments represented as duties. And yet remember he was a bishop's son, and the duty to God was the supposed basis.' Elsewhere (p. 304) Coleridge well describes Beaumont and Fletcher as 'high-flying, passive-obedience Tories.'

[2] This was more tersely than politely expressed by an early critic (Flecknoe, in his *Discourse of the English Stage*, 1660 *circ.*), who says that Beaumont and Fletcher 'seldom represent an honourable woman, without somewhat of Dol Common in her.'

homage to woman's virtue; but their view of life seems to be that intrigue is a game sometimes of chance, sometimes of skill, in which it is merely a question of time for the weaker player when she will succumb.

Their unconsciousness of these defects.

Such views of life are presented as a matter of course, without any affectation of frankness or cynicism, but also without any appearance of hesitation. In all matters related to morality, whether political or social, these dramatists seem to be unvexed by doubts or difficulties; and there are upon the whole few traces in them of bitterness against those who, unlike themselves, take rigid views of the conditions and duties of existence. It has probably surprised many readers of Beaumont and Fletcher to find that their references to Puritan opinions and ways of life are neither many nor striking. They probably personally came little into contact with Puritan society; nor do they appear to have troubled themselves much concerning it[1].

Their literary qualities as dramatists.

If from a consideration of features in the works of Beaumont and Fletcher due to the influence of the age we pass to an enquiry into the qualities which distinguish them as dramatic poets, it will not be difficult to arrive at results in accordance with the general verdict of modern criticism.

Their frailty in construction.

Beaumont and Fletcher construct with great lightness, and occasionally with admirable skill. Nearly all their plays, as has already been observed, are each formed out of two plots—a practice with which we are already familiar from Shakspere, but which in Beaumont and Fletcher almost wears the aspect of an acknowledged principle of construction[2]. It is to be regretted that they should have thus stereotyped what even in their hands is prone to lead to looseness of texture, and to dissipation of interest, in a play. On the other hand, it may be doubted whether any other writer has ever shown greater

[1] References to the Puritans, however, are not altogether absent from Fletcher's plays. I have noted such in *Women Pleased*; *The Woman's Prize*; *The Chances*.

[2] Dryden, in his Preface to his and Lee's *Œdipus* (1679), speaks of the 'under-plots of second persons' as an imperious necessity of the modern stage, and regrets that it should be thought impossible to return to the simple 'ancient method.' (See Scott's *Dryden*, vi. 126.)

skill in discerning the dramatic elements in works of narrative fiction and using them in the construction of dramatic plots; in this respect Beaumont and Fletcher appear to me unsurpassed even by Shakspere, if indeed they do not excel him in the freedom and lightness of their adaptive workmanship. Occasionally the tact is little short of wonderful with which they form a symmetrical and effective play out of the most heterogeneous materials[1].

Their range of characters.

In characterisation Beaumont and Fletcher are extremely felicitous within a limited range. Certain types of character, such as the tyrant and the blunt outspoken old soldier, constantly recur in their serious dramas. No species of character was a greater favourite with them than the devoted woman; and it was here that they availed themselves so largely of a device which in their age was by no means confined to the stage. It seems not to have been unusual for love-sick ladies to accompany their lovers in a page's dress; and there is therefore something conventional in the constant repetition of this device in Beaumont and Fletcher. The opportunity was thus created for heightening by contrast the softness of the female character which they knew so well how to pourtray. In comic characterisation they cover a wider range, and are equally successful in drawing characters of a high comedy and of a low comedy type. The former they more especially affect; but in the latter too they, and Fletcher alone more especially, must be allowed to have achieved some comic creations of indisputable originality[2].

Their ease and grace of diction.

But it is less in construction and characterisation than in diction that we have to seek for Beaumont and Fletcher's most distinctive excellences. Here their poetic gifts were no doubt enhanced by the tact of which their training and experience made them masters, and which their observation and criticism of one another had no doubt helped to form. Thus they acquired what is well ascribed to Fletcher in a Prologue to *The Chances*, the art of

[1] See especially *Women Pleased.*

[2] *The Humorous Lieutenant* is a *Capitan Sparento* of a quite new kind; and *The Spanish Curate* is an equally fresh type.

'sweet expression, quick conceit,
Familiar language, fashion'd to the weight
Of those that speak it;'—

Their pathos.

and became in outward form attractive in a degree hardly equalled by any other of our dramatists. If they are wanting in tragic elevation, they are masters of tragic pathos[1]. In pathetic passages they display a natural grace and sweetness which never cloy, and which they seem to have had thoroughly at command[2]. Nothing short of true poetic feeling and some knowledge of that well of sweetest sentiment, woman's heart, could have prompted the beautiful passages of this description in which the works of these dramatists abound.

Their grace and felicity of style.

Beaumont and Fletcher are in general free from any tendency to bombast or rant; although their characters and situations are at times extravagantly conceived, in diction they rarely pass beyond the limits of the appropriate[3], or fall into the excesses of style which they had ridiculed together with other absurdities in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. The singular felicity of their diction is equally apparent in many of the lyrics scattered through their dramas, and in the dialogue, which though nowhere containing passages of deep wisdom graven in undying verse like Shakspere's, is brilliant with beauties of expression dropped by the poet 'like the lazy minutes, which past once are forgotten[4].'

Fletcher's versification.

The beauty of Beaumont and Fletcher's diction is inseparably married to that of their versification. It may be regarded as established that in versification Fletcher has a manner of his own to which Beaumont never completely attained, or perhaps desired to attain. Of the peculiarities which on this head distinguish Fletcher among our dramatists

[1] 'In easy dialogue is Fletcher's praise;
He moved the mind, but had not power to raise.'
Dryden to Congreve (on *The Double Dealer*).

[2] Attention has been already directed to a curious illustration of this characteristic of Beaumont and Fletcher. Their *sham* pathos is almost as effective as their *real*. See *e.g. The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *The Woman's Prize* (cf. *ante*).

[3] There is some bombast in *A Wife for a Month*.

[4] *The Custom of the Country* (iii. 2).

his frequent use of the feminine ending is the most noticeable. In his plays, lines ending with one or even two unaccented syllables are more common than in those of any other Elisabethan dramatist. Add to this, that in the line itself the pause is often allowed to rest on an unaccented instead of an accented syllable. Again, he frequently breaks up the iambic feet of his lines into tribrachs, or in other words uses three-syllable instead of two-syllable feet. The result is that his blank-verse possesses a character of its own; it sacrifices firmness for the sake of a softly sweet—what may be truly described as an insinuating—effect. The double risk is run of a monotony of effect resulting from the frequent recurrence of the double endings, and of an effeminate tone, such as Aristophanes ridiculed in Euripides, appearing to characterise the broken-up feet. The former must, I think, be allowed to be an objection to which Fletcher's verse is open; under the latter it can hardly be said to fall very decidedly, as his poetic taste seems to prevent him from allowing the tendency in question to carry him too far[1]. Altogether, it is difficult to read Fletcher without feeling that his versification is, so to speak, *transnormal*. Thus the outward form of his verse, like much in the spirit and contents of his and his associate's plays, reminds us how near at hand is the close of that Elisabethan drama of which these two writers are among the most brilliant ornaments, but whose course they did little to elevate or ennoble, and whose decay they did little to prevent.

Beaumont and Fletcher not above their age.

True greatness, whether in a poet, in a statesman, or in a man of science, consists in being above or before the age, and thus being enabled to become one of its teachers. No such stamp is impressed on the monuments which remain to us of the dramatic genius of Beaumont and Fletcher.

[1] Such a passage as this may be taken as an extreme instance of Fletcher's manner,—and how charming it is in its licence!

'How sweet these solitary places are! how wantonly
The wind blows through the leaves, and courts and plays with 'em.'
(*The Pilgrim*, v. 4.)

The trisyllabic endings were perhaps a freedom originally borrowed from Ariosto, who wrote whole comedies in *endecasillabi sdrucciolì* (hendecasyllables which slip along, *i.e.* end with a dactyl). Cf. Klein, iv. 305.

The littleness of their age, not its better aspirations, reflects itself in their plays. It was an age of tyrants and their favourites; of evil counsellors and evil counsels; of pandars and minions; of cloaked vices and bedizened grossness; of blatant theories and systems; of the decay of principles and beliefs. Such a list of features is of course far from completing its portraiture; but it cannot be denied that they are prominent among the signs of the times. The best safeguard of a national life, domestic virtue, and the most invigorating element in national feeling, a healthy national self-confidence, were endangered by the degeneracy and degradation to be found in those spheres of society on which public attention necessarily concentrated itself. The rule of statesmen was succeeded by the sway of adventurers; and Court intrigues usurped the place of national enterprises. Beaumont and Fletcher breathed a corrupt atmosphere, without, so far as we can see, aspiring after rarer and purer air. The national history was to them a source neither of indignant contrast nor of cheering consolation; and of the book of nature they were contented to turn but a few leaves. They were moved by no force of genius or of character to go deeper or soar higher than the age demanded; they neither inherited the divining-rod of Shakspere nor laboured with the mattock of Ben Jonson; their pathos is incidental rather than essential to them, though they could move its spring at their wish, and their humour fails to penetrate beneath the surface. Their plays will never cease to dazzle and to delight, even though denied that representation on the stage which, it cannot be doubted, would fully prove their almost unparalleled theatrical effectiveness; but it may be questioned whether there is any one work of theirs capable of fully satisfying the mind which they stimulate into attention, or of thoroughly harmonising the feelings which they stir into tumult. Nearly always brilliant, at times irresistibly attractive, the plays of Fletcher and his associate will never cease to be admired where they are read; but they are unlikely at any time to achieve the one kind of success to which they never seem to have attained, and to take deep root in the national heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE END OF THE OLD DRAMA.

HAVING spoken of Beaumont and Fletcher in the preceding chapter, I propose to notice in the present those other authors of mark whose first extant dramatic works made their appearance after the death of Elisabeth, and whose activity as dramatists falls wholly or in the main before the period of the Civil War.

John Webster (died 1650 *circ.*).

The first of these who claims attention has rarely been denied the honourable place which is his due in the illustrious company of our great dramatic poets.

In some at least of the dramatic works which remain to us from the hand of JOHN WEBSTER[1], it is impossible not to recognise evidence of a genius of commanding originality, though not of very versatile powers. Unfortunately but few plays have been preserved of which he was the sole author; for it is precisely in these that his most peculiar gifts stand forth most conspicuously.

His life.

Of his life extremely little is known. It appears from the dedication to his *Monuments of Honour*, a pageant produced in 1624 in honour of a Lord Mayor who was a member of the Merchant Tailors' Company[2], that Webster himself was 'one born free of' it. On the basis of this

[1] *The Works of John Webster: with some Account of the Author, and Notes.* By the Rev. A. Dyce. New Edition, 1857.—*The Dramatic Works of John Webster.* Edited by William Hazlitt. 4 vols., 1857.

[2] This pageant characteristically concludes with a declaration on the part of the author, that he 'could a more curious and elaborate way have expressed himself,' had he not been desirous of avoiding to 'trouble my noble Lord' and 'puzzle the understanding of the common people.'

fact, a father and a mother, as well as a wife and a daughter, have been found for him. Gildon's statement that he held the office of clerk at St. Andrew's, Holborn, remains unconfirmed by other evidence. Henslowe's *Diary* however supplies us with a few incontrovertible data as to the earlier part of Webster's career as a dramatist, which he must have begun before November, 1601[1], when Henslowe mentions '*The Gwisse*' (possibly only a new version of Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*) as a play by Webster. Another entry, under 1602, shows him to have been engaged together with Munday and others upon a play called *Caesar's Fall;* other plays by several hands, now lost, with which his name is connected by Henslowe, are *The Two Harpies* (or whatever else be the correct reading for the title '*too harpes*' given in the *Diary*) and *Christmas comes but once a Year*. Both belong to 1602.

Data of his career as a dramatist.

Webster seems to have actively engaged in co-operation with other playwrights. He contributed to *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, or at least to the First Part of the play in two Parts called *Lady Jane*, of which *Sir Thomas Wyatt* appears to have been an abridgment[2]. He also joined Dekker in the composition of the two rollicking comedies, *Westward Ho* and *Northward Ho*[3]. A tragedy by him and Ford, now lost, called *A late Murther of the Sonn upon the Mother*, was licensed in 1624. He also, as will be seen, combined with William Rowley in at least one of the pieces attributed to their joint authorship. And (in 1604) he supplied the second edition of Marston's *Malcontent*, which was augmented by the author himself, with additions including, as is generally supposed, the Induction to the play[4].

His co-operation with other playwrights.

With his brother dramatists, so many of whom worked in company with him, he seems in general to have been on good terms. He 'ever' (as he says in the remarkable passage in the Address prefixed to *Vittoria Corombona*, where he gives a kind of estimate of several among his dramatic contemporaries) 'truly cherished his good opinion of

His literary friends and patrons.

[1] As to *The Weakest goeth to the Wall, vide infra.*

[2] Cf. *ante*, p. 47. [3] Cf. *ante*, p. 48. [4] Cf. *ante*, p. 60.

other men's worthy labours;' he addresses encomiastic verses to Munday (as a translator) and to Thomas Heywood (as author of the *Apology for Actors*); in return his brother dramatists, Middleton, Rowley, and Ford, hail his masterpiece (*The Duchess of Malfi*) with warm acknowledgments. Towards the public, on the other hand, Webster appears to bear himself with a conscious pride in some degree resembling that of Ben Jonson; nor can a tendency to under-estimate his own powers have been one of his weaknesses[1]. Whether he enjoyed the favour of other patrons of rank besides those to whom he dedicates one or two of his plays, we do not know; the lines in memory of Henry Prince of Wales seem to point to some token of good-will having been received from the Prince by their author[2].

Confusion with a namesake.

The above comprises the whole of our information concerning Webster's personal life. The authors of a pamphlet called *Histrio-Mastix*, published in 1654 in answer to the *Academiarum Examen* of John Webster, who, as Mr. Dyce has shown, was a different person from the dramatist[3], speak of their adversary as 'the Quondam Player,' adding the saving clause 'as 'tis conceived.' He is afterwards mentioned as *presumably* ('as I suppose') 'that poet whose glory was once to be the Author of Stage-plaies (as *The Devil's Law-Case*) but now the Tutor of Universities.' Clearly there is no reason to conclude from these passages and the probably intentional confusion they betray, either that John Webster the dramatist was ever a player in the ordinary sense of the term, or that he had ever been at the University, or that he was alive in 1654[4].

[1] See the addresses prefixed to *The White Devil* and to *The Devil's Law-Case*.

[2] See *A Monumental Column*, &c., *ad fin.* The poem contains one or two vigorous passages—in particular those in which slander and 'waste elegies' are alike waved aside from the Prince's tomb, and a fine compliment is paid in passing to 'his sweet Homer and my friend'—Chapman.

[3] See Dyce's Introduction. The John Webster in question was a clergyman and a 'practitioner in physic,' of Clitheroe. Cf. as to this learned fanatic Mr. Crossley's Introduction to *Potts' Discovery of Witches* (*Chetham Society's Publ.*, 1845).

[4] The last two assumptions are thought inevitable by Mr. Hazlitt. In the

The date of Webster's death is quite unknown; but he can hardly have lived long, if at all, into the latter half of the century.

Webster's plays. Joint and doubtful plays.

Of Webster's plays those in which he was associated with Dekker have been already noticed. *Sir Thomas Wyatt* can perhaps be hardly judged with fairness in the condition in which it has come down to us; *Westward Ho* and *Northward Ho*, though by no means devoid of a vigorous humour, would certainly not of themselves raise Webster's fame as a dramatist to a high level. *A Cure for a Cuckold*, published in 1661 by the bookseller Kirkman as 'an excellent old play' by Webster and William Rowley, is thought by Dyce to be rightly thus assigned. I should be inclined to attribute no small share in the execution, if not in the contrivance, of the serious plot to Webster's coadjutor. A power of giving expression to an unusual refinement as well as elevation of sentiment seems to characterise several plays to which William Rowley was a contributor; and for the exercise of this power the almost over-ingenious conception of the story of Clare and of her oracular command to her lover furnishes sufficient opportunities[1]. The resemblance of the situation to one in Massinger's *Parliament of Love* (pointed out by Geneste) is striking; but the plots take a different turn, Webster and Rowley's not being very perspicuously contrived at the close. The comic plot which gives its ribald title to the play need not be dwelt upon; but it must be allowed that there are few comedies of this description which contain a more thoroughly diverting character than that of the worthy mariner Compass, who returns from a three years' voyage to find that many things, beyond comment,

Webster and William Rowley's A Cure for a Cuckold (pr. 1661)

absence of all evidence on the subject, it is perhaps hardly worth while observing that Webster seems occasionally to manifest an acquaintance with University matters (see *The Devil's Law-Case*, ii. 3; and *ib.*, i. 2, a curious contribution to the history of the testimonial-system:

> 'Letters of commendations!
> Why, 'tis reported that they are grown stale,
> When places fall i' th' University').

[1] See particularly iii. 1; and cf. *ante*, pp. 78, 80.

although as it proves not beyond cure, have happened during his absence. The whole business, including the legal consultations with the attorneys Pettifog and Dodge and a long-winded counsellor in the Three Tuns' Tavern [1], is irresistibly comical, and in parts resembles Molière's most delectable expositions of the humours of unfortunate husbands [2].

Webster and William Rowley's (?) The Thracian Wonder (pr. 1661).

The same bookseller, Kirkman, to whom we owe (together with other services to our dramatic literature) the preservation of the play just noted, in 1661 put forth *The Thracian Wonder* as a play written by Webster and William Rowley. Dyce and Collier both reject the supposition that Webster had any hand in it; and, as the latter suggests, Kirkman's assertion may have had its origin in the fact that in 1617 one *William* Webster published a reproduction of the story of Argentile and Curan from Warner's *Albion's England*, which story (itself connected with those of *Havelok the Dane* and of many later romantic fictions) in some degree resembles the plot of *The Thracian Wonder*. This 'comical history,' as it calls itself, is uninteresting; the fulfilment of an obscure and complicated oracle being in any case ill adapted for the basis of a dramatic action.

Webster and Dekker's (?) The Weakest Goeth to the Wall (pr. 1600 ?).

A play called *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall* (said to have been first printed in 1600; Hazlitt had however seen no edition earlier than 1618) has been attributed, in the first instance by Phillips, to Webster conjointly with Dekker. But the authority is worthless [3]; and there is certainly little in the play itself to support the statement. At the same time the play in question may be noticed as a not unpleasing production; its romantic story, opening with a Dumb Show of unparalleled fulness [4],

[1] Webster seems, as observed below, to have been specially fond of satirising the practitioners of the law.

[2] See *e.g.* a scene in which Compass learns his fate from two boys (of the true river-breed) whom he meets on his return to 'sweet Blackwall.'

[3] See Dyce's Introduction, p. xvi, *note*.

[4] 'After an Alarum, enter, one way, the Duke of Burgundy; another way, the Duke of Anjou with his power; they encounter: Burgundy is slain. Then enter the Duchess of Burgundy with young Frederick in her hand, who, being

keeps up the reader's interest, and there is some homely humour of a genuine ring in honest Barnaby Bunch, who robustly sustains among Frenchmen the honour of 'England, where the poor may have a pot of ale for a penny, fresh ale, firm ale, nappy ale, nippitate ale, irregular, secular ale, courageous, contagious ale, alcumistical ale.' Neither in the humour nor in the pathos of this play is there anything which recalls Webster's manner; in the former respect however it is by no means unlike Dekker.

Plays by Webster only: The White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona (pr. 1612).

Of the two plays of Webster in which his tragic genius has produced its most potent effects, *The White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona,* first printed in 1612, is the earlier. Though I cannot agree with those who regard this tragedy as the masterpiece of its author, it is beyond all doubt a most remarkable work. Its plot as well as its characters appears to have been borrowed directly from an Italian source, inasmuch as the history of the Duke di Brachiano and his two wives, of whom the second bore the name of Vittoria Accorambuoni and was the widow of the nephew of Cardinal Montalto, afterwards Pope Sixtus V, does not appear to have been reproduced in any English or French version.

This extraordinary tragedy must be described as at once highly elaborated and essentially imperfect. In the Address to the Reader already referred to, Webster confesses with conscious pride that this play was the fruit of protracted labour; but his efforts appear to have been directed rather to accumulating and elaborating effective touches of detail than to producing a well-proportioned whole. The catastrophe seems to follow at too great a distance from the climax; and in spite of the genius of the author, it is impossible to resist a sense of weariness in the progress of the later part of the action. But a more serious defect attaches to *Vittoria Corombona* than this. Its characters—above all that of the heroine—are conceived with the most striking original power and carried

pursued by the French, leaps into a river, leaving the child upon the bank, who is presently found by the Duke of Brabant, who comes to aid Burgundy when it was too late.'

but with unerring consistency; but there is no relief to the almost sickening combination of awe and loathing created by such characters and motives as this drama presents.

Vittoria—the White Devil—herself is a conception not easily defined. A hot passionate nature clothed in a garb of cool outward self-control and contemptuous superiority to the ordinary fears and to the ordinary scruples of women, is a conception which we instinctively feel to be true to nature—to nature, that is, in one of her abnormal moods. In the first scene (i. 2) in which Vittoria appears she reveals the deadliness of her passionate resolution, in relating to her paramour the dream which is to urge him on to the murder of his duchess and her own husband. The ghastliness of the imagery of the dream is indescribably effective, as is the horrible scornfulness of the closing phrase:

> 'When to my rescue there arose, methought,
> A whirlwind, which let fall a massy arm
> From that strong plant;
> And both were struck dead by that sacred yew,
> *In that base shallow grave that was their due.*'

The scene in which she is tried for the murder of her husband (iii. 2) has attracted the comment of several critics —among others of Charles Lamb, who strangely enough speaks of the 'innocence-resembling boldness' of Vittoria. Mr. Dyce has demurred to this view, which appears to me utterly erroneous, and destructive of the consistency which the character throughout maintains. Not 'sweetness' and 'loveliness' but a species of strange fascination, such as certainly may be exercised by heartless pride, seems to surround the figure and the speech of the defiant sinner who will not withdraw an inch from the position which she has assumed, and who has for her judges nothing but withering scorn. Almost equally effective are the burst of passion with which (iv. 2) she turns upon the jealous Brachiano, and the gradual subsiding of her wrath, as of a fire, under his caresses. The terrible energy of the last act is almost unparalleled; but the character of Vittoria

remains true to itself, except perhaps in the last—rather trivial—reflexion with which she dies[1].

The remaining characters of the tragedy are drawn with varying degrees of force; but they all seem to stand forth as real human figures under the lurid glare of a storm-laden sky: nor is it easy to analyse the impression created by so dense a mixture of unwholesome humours, wild passions, and fearful sorrows. The total effect is unspeakably ghastly—though in one of the most elaborately terrible scenes (v. 1) the intention becomes too obvious, and 'several forms of distraction' exhibited by the mad Cornelia strike one as in some degree conventional, as they are to some extent plagiarised.

It must however be observed that in this play, as in *The Duchess of Malfi*, Webster creates some of his most powerful effects by single touches—flashes of genius which seem to light up of a sudden a wide horizon of emotions. It is in these flashes that Webster—and perhaps Ford—can alone among our dramatists be said at times to equal Shakspere. They are of such a nature as not to require to be pointed out to any reader endowed with the faintest sense of dramatic perception; and it is in this combination of subtlety and directness that their power lies.

The Duchess of Malfi (pr. 1623).

The Duchess of Malfi (first printed in 1623) bears to my mind the signs of a more matured workmanship than *The White Devil*. The action is full indeed of horrors, but not, so to speak, clogged with them; the tragic effect is not less deep, but pity may claim an equal share in it with terror. The story (taken from a novel by Bandello which through Belleforest's French version found its way into Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure*[2]) is in itself simple and sym-

[1] How fine, on the other hand, is her preceding exclamation of horror:

'My soul, like to a ship in a black storm,
Is driven, I know not whither.'

It is thus that this mysterious woman seems to pass away from us, rather than with her subsequent words:

'O, happy they that never saw the court,
Nor ever knew great men but by report!'

[2] Lope de Vega in 1618 wrote *El Mayordomo de la Duquesa de Amalfi*. (Hazlitt; and cf. Klein, x. 493.)

metrical, and the fifth act (though perhaps rather excessive in length[1]) seems a natural complement to the main action. The death of the unhappy Duchess, whose crime it was to marry her steward from sheer love, is here avenged upon her brothers and murderers by the instrument of their own cruelty. In the character of the Duchess there is little very specially attractive; but it is drawn with a simplicity not devoid of power, and designed perhaps to contrast in its artlessness with the diabolical craft of her persecutors. It is not however till the fourth act that the author has an opportunity of putting forth his peculiar power. He has accumulated in it every element of horror of which the situation seems to admit (indeed the dance of madmen is in every sense superfluous); the preparations for the Duchess' death are made in her presence; her coffin is brought in, her dirge is sung, then she is strangled, to revive only for a moment in order to learn from her executioner, himself full of pity and remorse, that her husband still lives. This act abounds in those marvellous touches of which Webster is master; the most powerful of them all is the sudden thrill of pity in the breast of the brother who has commanded her death, on beholding his command fulfilled:

'*Bos.* Do you not weep?
Other sins only speak; murder shrieks out:
The element of water moistens the earth,
But blood flies upwards and bedews the heavens.
Ferd. Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young.'

Less varied in its characters, this tragedy is in my opinion more powerful in its total effect than *The White Devil;* nor is it likely ever to be wholly lost sight of by the English stage[2].

The Devil's Law-Case (first printed in 1623, and written shortly before it was published[3]) is a romantic comedy

The Devil's Law-Case (pr. 1623).

[1] Possibly it was in part abbreviated in the performance, as the title-page speaks of divers things having been printed 'that the length of the Play would not beare in the Presentment.'

[2] I remember, not many years ago, seeing the Duchess of Malfi well acted by Miss Glyn; the impression which the tragedy produces on the stage is indescribable.

[3] The massacre of Amboyna (Feb. 1622) is alluded to in iv. 2. (Dyce.)

with a very complicated plot, the source of which seems uncertain[1]. Though quite in Webster's manner, and in the trial-scene (iv. 2) elaborating one of his favourite subjects, the management of a law-case, it is greatly inferior to the two tragedies briefly described above; and such interest as it possesses, apart from individual touches[2], lies chiefly in the conduct of a story of many folds and with no very satisfactory ending.

Appius and Virginia (pr. 1654).

Finally, in *Appius and Virginia*, printed in 1654, probably after its author's death, we may consider ourselves justified in recognising a work of his later manhood, if not of his old age. The subject is indeed one which might readily be supposed to have commended itself to Webster's love of the terrible; but he has treated it without unduly adding fresh effects of his own invention. Yet the play has genuine power; and were it not that the action seems to continue too long after the death of Virginia (in iv. 1), this tragedy might be described as one of the most commendable efforts of its class. The evenness, however, of its execution, and the absence (except in the central situation) of any passages of a peculiarly striking or startling character, exclude *Appius and Virginia* from the brief list of Webster's most characteristic productions.

Of Roman history he seems to have had little know-

[1] Hazlitt could not find it in Goulart's *Histoires Admirables*, whence the *Biographia Dramatica* declares it to be taken. The incident of Contarino's being cured instead of killed by Romelio's dagger—

> 'His steel has lighted in the former wound
> And made free passage for the congeal'd blood' &c. (iii. 2)—

for which a parallel has been found in the 'miraculous' anecdote of Iason of Pherae, related by Valerius Maximus, i. 8, in some degree resembles one in Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* (cf. *ante*, p. 206).

[2] How admirable is the tranquil satire of Leonora's speech to her waiting-woman (iii. 3):

> 'Thou hast liv'd with me
> These forty years; we have grown old together,
> As many ladies and their women do,
> With talking nothing, and with doing less.
> We have spent our life in that which least concerns life,
> Only in putting on our clothes: and now I think on't
> I have been a very courtly mistress to thee,
> I have given thee good words, but no deeds.'

ledge; for the story of his play he derived, like the author of the old *Apius and Virginia*[1] before him, from Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure*, whither it had found its way from the *Pecorone* of Giovanni Fiorentino[2]. On the other hand, he has infused considerable life into the familiar tale, and reproduced its characters, in particular the tyrant and his fawning henchman Marcus, with extreme distinctness of individualisation. The scene at the tribunal, in which Appius contrives to cast the veil of fair and honourable dealing over the plot so well that the honest Icilius can only exclaim bewildered, 'Sure all this is damn'd cunning' (iii. 2), is admirable; but Webster, as has been seen, excelled in scenes of this description.

Webster's chief characteristics as a dramatist: The intensity of his imagination, and the elaborateness of his workmanship, in the sphere of the Terrible.

Little needs to be added to the above in the way of general comment on the characteristics of Webster's dramatic genius. The strange combination they present displays itself with the utmost distinctness in *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. Webster loves to accumulate the favourite furniture of theatrical terror—murders and executions, the dagger and the pistol, the cord and the coffin, together with skulls and ghosts, and whatever horrors attend or are suggested by the central horror of them all—death. Herein he is not exceptional, least of all exceptional among the Elisabethans, of whom, from Kyd to Marston, so many were alike addicted to the employment of such machinery. What is distinctive in Webster, is in the first place the extraordinary intensity of his imagination in this direction, and again the elaborateness of his workmanship, which enabled him to surpass—it may fairly be said—all our old dramatists in a field which many of them were at all times ready to cultivate. If he has

[1] Cf. vol. i. p. 111. The Spanish poet Cueva produced a *Tragedia de Virginia y Apio Claudio* in 1580 (Klein, ix. 219).—Webster's tragedy was adapted by Betterton under the title of *The Roman Father* (1679). John Dennis' play on the subject will be mentioned below.

[2] Inconsistently with other passages in the play, and of course with history, Appius Claudius (i. 1) speaks of himself as 'so poor a plebeian.' Virginius, on the other hand, shows himself deserving of Appius' description of him as 'a proud Plebeian' by declaring his ancestors to 'have continued these eight hundred years' (iv. 1).

himself been surpassed on his own ground, it is only in an age which was able to refine upon the horrors of the romanticism which it sought to revive; and if the mantle of Webster as the dramatist of the horrible has fallen upon any modern shoulders, it is upon those of Victor Hugo.

His insight into human nature.

But—and I need not stop to enquire how far the comparison suggested would hold good in this respect also—Webster's most powerful plays and scenes are characterised by something besides their effective appeal to the emotion of terror. He has a true insight into human nature, and is capable of exhibiting the operation of powerful influences upon it with marvellous directness. He knows that men and women will lay open the inmost recesses of their souls in moments of deep or sudden agitation; he knows that it is on such occasions that unexpected contrasts—a movement of genuine compassion in an assassin, a movement of true dignity in a harlot—will offer themselves to the surprised spectator; he knows the fury and the bitterness, the goad and the after-sting of passion, and the broken vocabulary of grief. All these he knows, and is able to reproduce, not continually or wearisomely, but with that perception of supremely fitting occasions which is one of the highest, as it is beyond all doubt one of the rarest, powers of true dramatic genius.

His humour.

It is impossible that a dramatist possessing this faculty should be without humour of a very remarkable order; and though we unfortunately possess but a single comedy which can be ascribed to Webster only, there can be no doubt as to his possession of the gift in question. Some of the humorous characters in *The White Devil* (Flamineo and Camillo) are effectively drawn; and I see no reason why the excellent fun of *A Cure for a Cuckold* should not be attributable to Webster. His satirical powers are great, as may be seen from the versatility with which he varies his attacks upon the favourite subject of his social satire—the law, its practice and its practitioners.

His poetic feeling.

It is equally impossible that the characteristic powers of Webster's dramatic genius should have been unaccompanied by fine poetic feeling. Of this he occasionally gives

evidence in passages of considerable beauty, though upon imagery he appears not to have bestowed any very marked attention[1]. I am not aware that either in the respect of particular passages, or of entire scenes, Webster's debt to Shakspere is so large as it has been represented to be[2]. I do not know what support can (with the exception of Cornelia's madness) be found to substantiate Hazlitt's[3] assertion that Webster's two most famous tragedies are 'too like Shakespear, and often direct imitations of him, both in general conception and individual expression.' On the other hand, the same critic seems by no means to go too far in saying that these plays 'upon the whole perhaps come the nearest to Shakespear of anything we have on record.' What more need be said, in acknowledgment of the true dramatic genius which Webster possessed, than that this opinion seems just?

Webster and Shakspere.

But let its meaning not be misunderstood. In his power of revealing dramatically by truthful touches the secrets of human nature, Webster was like Shakspere. He was unlike him in rarely, if ever, using that power in combination with this other: of exhibiting dramatically the developement of character under the influence of incident. The White Devil is a truthful presentment of a possible, but abnormal, being; the Duchess of Malfi can hardly be said to have a character at all. What Webster in general so admirably reproduces, amounts to situations only; in construction he is far from strong, and in characterisation he rarely passes beyond the range of ordinary types. There

Webster deficient in characterisation.

[1] In *The White Devil* occurs the original of the well-known thought—

'The good are better made by ill,
As odours crushed are sweeter still.'

See i. 1: 'Perfumes, the more they are chaf'd, the more they render
Their pleasing scents, and so affliction
Expresseth virtue fully, whether true,
Or else adulterate.'

The idea reappears elsewhere.

[2] Vittoria Corombona (if Mr. Mitford's emendation be correct) compares herself to Shakspere's Portia (iii. 2). But I can hardly think the emendation allowable, though it has been accepted by Dyce.

[3] *Lectures, &c.*, p. 124.

seems little moral purpose at work in his most powerful efforts; nor is it conceivable that his imagination, so occupied with the associations of the law-court and the charnel-house, should have been able to wing his genius to freer and loftier flights.

Cyril Tourneur.

To these remarks on Webster may be appended a notice of the only play with which I am acquainted from the hand of a dramatist who in the bent, though not in the power of his genius, appears to have resembled the author of *The Duchess of Malfi*. Of the personal life of CYRIL TOURNEUR absolutely nothing is known; but we learn, on the evidence of a contemporary, that his fame never reached a more than mediocre pitch. His play bearing the significant title of *The Revenger's Tragedy*[1] (licensed and printed 1607) has one of the blackest and most sanguinary of plots which a perverted imagination, fed by the worst scandals of the age, could have devised; but there is some dramatic reality in the conception of the Italian court, its Duke the 'parched luxar,' his heir Lusurioso, his 'step-Duchess,' her sons—a brood like Catharine de'Medici's—Ambitioso, Supervacuo, and a third who alone goes by a colourless name (Junior), his bastard Spurio, and his fawning nobles. Vindici, the hero of the drama, and his brother Hippolito, go near to realise the ideal of a tragedy of revenge humorously propounded in a nearly contemporary drama[2]. They do not indeed kill themselves, but they welcome death as a fitting termination to their active efforts. Horribly realistic in some of its effects, which only too fully express the 'quaintness of malice' Hippolito commends in Vindici, this play lacks the relief of contrast; for the chaste heroine Castiza is quite uninteresting, and the repentance of her mother Gratiana little edifying; but there is power in the

The Revenger's Tragedy (pr. 1607).

[1] Described by Geneste, x. 19. See Dodsley (new edition), vol. x, and *The Ancient British Drama*, vol. ii.

[2] Cf. La Writ's quotation in *The Little French Lawyer* (iv. 4):

> 'I love a dire revenge.
> Give me the man that will all others kill,
> And last himself.'

totality of the dramatic picture, besides occasional touches of grim humour in the midst of horrors[1]. The theme of *The Revenger's Tragedy* seems to have been of a kind congenial to its author; for his other extant tragedy, called *The Atheist's Tragedy, or The Honest Man's Revenge* (printed 1611)—of which I can only judge at second-hand—resembles the former in the character of its plot. A succession of horrors—there are two churchyard scenes—leads up to the catastrophe, the frenzy and suicide of the hitherto relentless and ruthless villain of the play. Passages extracted from this tragedy[2] are distinguished by an imagery forcible although tending to extravagance and turgidity; but I have seen nothing by Tourneur which would justify his being ranked near Webster as a tragic poet. He wrote a third play, *The Nobleman*, which perished in one of the fires kindled by 'Warburton's cook.'

Philip Massinger (1584–1639).

Among the secondary stars of the later Elisabethan drama none has received a wider and in many instances a more kindly recognition than PHILIP MASSINGER. Of his numerous plays a sufficiently large proportion has been preserved to enable posterity to form a fairly complete estimate of his genius as a dramatist; and having been long since well edited by a competent hand, he has been the subject of a more appreciative and exhaustive criticism than has fallen to the lot of most of his contemporaries. It is possible that his merits have thus come to be elevated above the place properly belonging to them in a comparative estimate of the chief writers of the Elisabethan drama; yet it may safely be asserted that, little as we know of Massinger personally, few names in our dramatic literature are entitled to a more cordial respect[3].

[1] It may be worth noting that here, as in so many plays of the kind, the machinery of a mask has to be employed to bring about the solution of the plot. Audiences must have wondered why tyrants should never have thought of suppressing so proved an expedient for tyrannicide.

[2] See Lamb's *Specimens;* and a full account of both the extant plays of Cyril Tourneur in *The Retrospective Review*, vol. vii, part ii. One of these passages is the famous fancy of the sea running up to the dead body,—which a modern poet was taxed with having stolen from Tourneur.

[3] The edition mentioned in the text is of course Gifford's (4 vols., 1805;

His life.

Philip Massinger was born at Salisbury in 1584, the son of a gentleman attached to the service of Henry Earl of Pembroke, and employed by him on at least one confidential negotiation of importance. Whether or not, as is happily conjectured by Hartley Coleridge, Philip received his baptismal name in honour of Pembroke's famous brother-in-law, and was brought up as a page to the Countess of Pembroke herself[1], it is certain that he retained a sentiment of grateful attachment to the noble family with which his name, as that of a greater among our poets, is indelibly associated[2]. In 1602 he was entered at St. Alban Hall in the University of Oxford, which he appears to have quitted in 1606, probably in consequence of his father's death. From this circumstance, and from subsequent evidence of the straits in which Massinger is found in his London career, it may be fairly conjectured that no effective patronage was extended to him by William Earl of Pembroke, the successor of his father's patron. Gifford has thought a reason for this discoverable in the probability that Massinger, while at Oxford, was converted to the Roman Catholic faith. It is hazardous to base one conjecture upon another; but I may venture to observe that, before I became aware of Gifford's supposition, I had, on the internal evidence of some of Massinger's plays, arrived at the same hypothesis as to his religion.

His difficulties.

For fifteen years—from 1606 to 1621, when Massinger's lost comedy of *The Woman's Plot* was performed at Court—

2nd edition, 1813). On this is based Colonel Cunningham's one vol. edition (1870), which contains in addition the tragedy *Believe as You List.* An earlier edition is J. Monck Mason's (4 vols., 1779). Gifford's contains a good essay on Massinger's dramatic writings by Dr. John Ferriar; nor will Hallam's criticisms (*Lit. of Europe*, vol. iii) of an author whom he valued so highly be overlooked. Hazlitt in his *Lectures* (p. 171) has a few caustic remarks, worth reading, on Massinger.

[1] This is suggested by Colonel Cunningham, who observes that Massinger's 'allusions to the position and minute duties of pages are perpetual.' The liveliest instance is little Ascanio (Maria) in *The Bashful Lover.*

[2] See the dedications of *The Bondman* and *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, and the rather wooden lines *Sero sed Serio* on the death of Charles Lord Herbert; Cunningham, p. 628.

we should be absolutely without information concerning him, were it not that his name is appended to two documents of melancholy significance discovered by Malone and Collier respectively at Dulwich College. In the former of these, Nathaniel Field, Robert Daborne, and Philip Massinger address to their 'most loving friend Mr. Phillipp Hinchlow' a pitiful request for a loan of five pounds out of a sum of 'ten pounds more at least' to be received from him 'for the play,' declaring that he 'understands their unfortunate extremity,' and cannot be 'so void of Christianity, but that he would throw so much money into the Thames as they now request of him.' Field is the author of the main part of this document, which appeals both to Henslowe's heartstrings (to use a favourite phrase of Massinger's) and to his interests (for without the money 'we cannot be bailed, nor I play any more till this be dispatched. It will lose you twenty pound ere the end of the next week, beside the hindrance of the next new play'). But Daborne and Massinger each append a postscript, that from the latter running thus: 'I have ever found you a true loving friend to me, and in so small a suit, it being honest, I hope you will not fail us.' From a receipt given by the emissary of the three unfortunate suppliants, it further appears that Henslowe did not prove obdurate. As he died in January, 1616, the document certainly belongs to this in every sense dark period of Massinger's life. The other document, which is a bond to Henslowe from Daborne and Massinger for 'the full and entire sum of three pounds of lawful money of England,' bears the date of July 4th, 1615[1].

Massinger and Fletcher.

Malone's discovery furnishes another clue to Massinger's occupations as an author in the earlier part of his career. In his postscript to Field's petition, Daborne says: 'The money shall be abated out of the money' [which] 'remains for the play of Mr. Fletcher and ours.' It is thus clear that already before the beginning of the year 1616 Fletcher was assisted by Massinger as a playwright; and since Beaumont

[1] See Cunningham, pp. xi–xii; the tripartite letter is also given by Gifford, vol. i. p. l.

died in March of the same year, it easily explains itself why Fletcher should in the later part of his career as a dramatist (as there is no doubt he did) have again had occasional recourse to Massinger's assistance. As to the extent of this assistance, considerable difference of opinion prevails; as to the fact of it, the above evidence and the express statement of Massinger's friend Sir Aston Cokain[1] allow no doubt.

Data as to his plays.

Meanwhile, it is certain that before the year in which we have the first notice of the production of any of his plays, Massinger had already been active as a dramatic author on his own account. A large number of old plays in MS. (not less than fifty-five) were, as is well known, destroyed in the middle of the last century by that Omar of our early drama execrated by posterity under the familiar designation of 'Warburton's cook[2];' and among these were not less than twelve stated in Warburton's list to be written by Massinger, and ten which are held to have been really by him. Eight of them, together with four which are extant[3], are not mentioned in the Office-book of Sir Henry Herbert, which is continued up to the close of Massinger's life, and which begins with May, 1622. *The Virgin Martyr* is, however, noticed in an extract from the Office-book of Sir George Buck under the year 1620. It is clear therefore that Massinger had produced at least

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 159. Sir Aston Cokain in his *Poems, Epigrams, &c.* (1658) states, in some lines addressed to the publisher of Beaumont and Fletcher in folio, that of the many plays in the volume Beaumont writ but few 'and Massinger in other few;' and in the *Epistle to Cotton* he says of the edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays:

> 'And my good friend, old Philip Massinger,
> With Fletcher, writ in some that are seen there.'

And in the epitaph on Fletcher and Massinger it is said of them that

> 'Plays they did write together, were great friends,
> And now one grave includes them in their ends.'

Cf. Gifford's Introduction, pp. xlvii, lxxiv.

[2] Warburton was Somerset Herald, and had left his collection to the care of this domestic, who applied fifty-two out of the number as coverings for her pastry.

[3] *viz. The Virgin Martyr; The Unnatural Combat; The Duke of Milan;* and (Middleton, Rowley, and Massinger's) *The Old Law.*

twelve plays before the year of Sir Henry Herbert's virtual accession to office.

From 1623, when *The Bondman* was produced, the dates of Massinger's plays, extant and non-extant, rapidly succeed one another. The former will be briefly noticed below; of the latter it is unnecessary to mention the titles[1].

His patrons.

Little or nothing remains besides the titles of his non-extant plays (eighteen in number) to supplement whatever conclusions as to Massinger's life and labours may seem derivable from the works preserved to us. *The Bondman* was produced in the presence of Philip Earl of Montgomery, the second son of his father's patron, and had the advantage, the Dedication informs us, of his 'liberal suffrage' in its favour. Some of his other plays are dedicated, in the usual terms, to noble and gentle patrons (including, in the case of *The Picture*, several members of the Inner Temple, whose names the author declines to particularise 'mountebank-like'), as to the nature of whose favours there is room for any kind of conjecture. In the case however of Sir Robert Wiseman, to whom *The Great Duke of Florence* is inscribed, Massinger confesses that had he 'not often tasted of that gentleman's bounty, for many years he had but faintly subsisted.' To the tragedy of *Believe as You List*, as containing awkward references to Spanish policy, the Master of the Revels refused his licence; and this has been with much probability conjectured to have been one of the reasons why, as he states in the Prologue to *The Guardian*, Massinger abstained for two years (1631–3) from the production of any new play. On the other hand, Queen

[1] Some doubt exists whether *The Spanish Viceroy*—which is supposed to have been full of allusions to Gondomar, and for the performance of which on their own responsibility the actors had to make a humble apology to the Master of the Revels—was by Massinger, and whether it was identical with a play called *The Spanish Viceroy, or The Honour of Women*, said by Malone to have been entered on the Stationers' Register in 1653. Mr. Cunningham appositely remarks that if Massinger was really the author of a play directed against Gondomar, the conjecture of his having been a Roman Catholic must fall to the ground. Cf. *ante*, p. 97.

Henrietta Maria witnessed the performance of the (non-extant) tragedy of *Cleander* in 1634; and the production of the (also non-extant) play of *The King and the Subject* in 1638 was warranted by the special allowance of King Charles I, although he marked one passage as 'too insolent and to be changed.'

His death.

Massinger died in March, 1639, and was buried in St. Saviour's Church, Southwark—as there seems no reason to doubt, in the grave to which Fletcher's remains had been previously consigned. The spot however cannot be identified.

Massinger's religious and political tone.

What little can be added to this barren record of a fruitful life must consist entirely of deductions as to Massinger's character from the works which he has left to us. They seem to me to show that, whether or not he was through manhood under the influence of a stricter faith than that of the national Church, he was a man of unusually sure and steady religious piety[1]. On the other hand, in his views of political relations he exhibits as a rule a moderate liberalism, if the term be permitted, by no means usual among the dramatists, or indeed among the poets in general, of his age. With a lofty conception of the privileges and position of princes he combines a freedom from any slavish view of the difference between them and other men, and a tolerably distinct sense of the limits of their prerogative[2]. To the former greatness of his country he seems to have cast back a glance of lingering regret[3]; but so far as we can judge from the

[1] See above all (for the subject of *The Virgin Martyr* of course brings with it a flow of religious fervour) the confession-scene in *The Emperor of the East* (v. 3) and in *The Bashful Lover* (iv. 2); and a strikingly natural tribute to a spirit of pious humility in *A Very Woman* (ii. 2 *ad fin.*). Nor is it probable that any but a Catholic would have devised the *dénouement* of *The Maid of Honour*.

[2] See particularly *The Emperor of the East* (cf. the remarks below), and *The Maid of Honour* (iv. 5). In *The Great Duke of Florence* (see Charomonte's speech, iv. 2) it must be allowed that Massinger falls into the preposterous tone of Beaumont and Fletcher as to the demands of loyalty.

[3] See the striking passage in *The Maid of Honour* (i. 2):

'If examples
May move you more than arguments, look on England,

evidence of his extant dramas, he was as discreet in the expression of his views of political life as he was sound in those views themselves. Of such scholarship as he might have carried away from Oxford I find few traces in his plays[1]; but his versatility in the choice of subjects seems to indicate that he was a man of considerable reading, and by no means willing to confine himself to the range with which most of his contemporaries were satisfied. The severe apprenticeship through which a dramatist had to pass in this period was probably in few cases put to so conscientious a use as in that of Massinger, whose works almost uniformly bear the impress—and I think the term implies something besides a cavil—of genuine hard work. The tone of his addresses to the public is as a rule characterised by a dignified modesty; and such traces as are discoverable of his relations with his fellow-dramatists point in the same direction[2].

His character as a literary man.

So few of Massinger's productions are to be regarded as essentially comedies, that there seems no sufficient reason for considering his plays in any but their probable chronological order. As to the earlier of them, however, this order is uncertain; and I therefore begin with a play best known—by name at least—among his tragic works.

Massinger's plays.

The Virgin Martyr is reckoned among the earliest of Massinger's productions, a conjecture which internal evidence seems to support. It was first printed in 1622; but already in 1620 mention is made of alterations introduced

Massinger and Dekker's The Virgin Martyr (by 1620).

> The empress of the European isles,
> And unto whom alone ours [Sicily] yields precedence;
> When did she flourish so, as when she was
> The mistress of the ocean, her navies
> Putting a girdle round about the world?
> When the Iberian quaked, her worthies named;
> And the fair flower-de luce grew pale, set by
> The red rose and the white!'

[1] In the Prologue to *Believe as You List* he indeed expressly deprecates his being considered more than an 'English scholar.' But see below.

[2] I refer to his (so far as we know) silent co-operation with Fletcher, and to his hearty praise of Shirley's *The Grateful Servant*. Shirley addressed some complimentary lines to Massinger on his *Renegado*.

into it for performance at the Red Bull. Its popularity is proved by the fact that four quarto editions of it are extant, ranging in their dates from 1622 to 1661.

The action of this play, in which Massinger was assisted by Dekker[1], is simplicity itself; nor is there the slightest attempt at refining upon the clear purpose of the fable. The first four acts are concerned with the martyrdom of Dorothea, whom the zealous persecutor Theophilus in vain seeks to turn from Christianity by the agency of his two daughters, themselves perverts. But under her influence they return to the true faith, and are thereupon slain by their indignant father, while the constancy of Dorothea herself is subjected to the most material tests. The relation between her and Antoninus, the heathen governor's son, is touchingly drawn. The repentance and martyrdom of Theophilus form a kind of epilogue, which occupies the last act.

The language here and there rises to eloquence[2]; but, upon the whole, the power of the execution is hardly equal to the grandeur of the sentiment. As to the characters of Hircius and Spungius, they are types of grovelling brutality; their names have become proverbial, but they are not drawn in the play with any extraordinary power. The distinguishing merit of this tragedy lies in the grandeur of the conception, which indicates a noble ambition to rise above the level of the themes to which the English tragedy of the age had accustomed itself and its audiences. There can be little doubt that, as Hallam has observed, the model followed by Massinger is that of the Spanish religious *autos*[3]; and it may be noted that he has even introduced among his *dramatis*

[1] Charles Lamb has suggested that to Dekker is due the scene between Dorothea and Angelo (ii. 1).

[2] See particularly Dorothea's fine speech (iv. 3: 'Thou fool,' &c.). A beautiful passage in iii. 1 is a probably unintentional reminiscence of Portia's famous speech in the trial-scene.

[3] The name of Theophilus suggests a connexion with the old miracle of that name (cf. vol. i. p. 180); but though there too Theophilus is a convert, and is served by an evil spirit (the Devil himself in this instance), the story is a different one.

personae two supernatural agents, Theophilus' secretary, the evil spirit Harpax, and Dorothea's page, the good spirit Angelo.

Massinger's The Unnatural Combat (before 1639).

The Unnatural Combat (printed 1639) is called an 'old tragedy' by Massinger himself, and is therefore probably one of his earlier compositions. Its plot is of the gloomiest and ghastliest description—the story of a father who kills his son and entertains a guilty passion for his daughter. Even more forced than the atrocity of this tragic complication is the humour, or what is intended for the humour, of the 'poor captain' Belgarde; the impertinence of the Page, on the other hand, has a lifelike ring. That there is some force in the depiction of Malefort's endeavour to combat his own infatuation (iv. 1), and of the bestial villainy of his false friend Montreville, is undeniable; but no robe of poetic beauty is thrown over the spectral outline of such a plot as this; and the profusion of appalling effects, especially at the close, when Malefort, after being visited by the ghosts of his murdered wife and son, is killed by a flash of lightning, has to compensate for the author's inability to humanise so inhuman a theme.

The Duke of Milan (pr. 1623).

The Duke of Milan, of which the first edition bears date 1623, is regarded as one of Massinger's earliest productions. Repulsive and unrelieved by either pathos or humour as the action must be allowed to be, there is some force in the versatile villany of Francisco (which, like that of Iago, is only palliated by the existence of a motive for revenge), and some truthfulness in the change effected in the conduct of Marcelia by the discovery of her husband's unreasonably selfish passion. Thus, though unpleasing in the extreme, the developement of the plot cannot be described as unnatural, and even displays a certain moral power in illustrating the results of the ungovernable passion of a really lawless mind. With some skill too the politic wisdom of Duke Sforza's public conduct is contrasted with the headstrong rashness of his action in his private affairs. The play, as a whole, is most effective; but it altogether lacks the alternation of light and shade requisite to render the treatment of such a subject artistically enjoyable; while

the horrors of the last act are of a nature to repel any but the most jaded taste[1].

The Bondman (1623).

The Bondman (first acted 1623[2]) is undoubtedly one of Massinger's more remarkable works. The historical background to the plot is the liberation of Syracuse from the Carthaginian danger by Timoleon. While he and the youthful Leosthenes have led out the Syracusans to battle, the slaves rise and make themselves lords of the city, under the leadership of Marullo, the hero of the play. On his passion for Cleora, whom her lover Leosthenes has jealously bidden wear a kerchief over her eyes during his absence, the interest of the action turns. He controls his passion for her by a heroic effort, and thus gains her respect, which, on the return of the furiously jealous Leosthenes, passes by a natural transition into a more tender feeling. So far the intrigue is very interesting; but when in the end it appears that the Bondman is a disguised gentleman of Thebes, whose object was to take vengeance for the desertion of his sister upon Leosthenes, till his fury was stayed by Cleora's beauty and virtue, the action loses the interest of novelty, and some of the force is taken out of the eloquent declamations on the wrongs of slaves. Of Massinger's rhetorical ability this play furnishes abundant evidence[3].

The Renegado (1624).

In *The Renegado* (first acted 1624) we seem to recognise the influence, if not of some actual Spanish model, at least of the sentiment to which so many Spanish dramas—Calderon's *The Constant Prince e.g.*—bear testimony. The scene lies at Tunis, where a Venetian Renegado, Grimaldi, has attained to a high degree of power; but he is disgraced, and is then with the help of a Jesuit priest reconverted with the most satisfactory results. Grimaldi however plays only a secondary part in the action, the main interest of which centres in the loves of the Venetian Vitelli and the Turkish princess Donusa. Overcome by a sensual passion for the Christian merchant (for as such Vitelli has disguised himself), she at first tempts him astray from the path of

[1] They resemble those of *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (cf. *ante*, p. 178, note 1).

[2] It was revived in 1719; and again in 1779, with some alterations by Cumberland.

[3] See particularly Marullo's speech, iv. 2.

virtue; but conscience and the influence of the good Jesuit beckon him back; and he is resisting her seductions at the very moment when both are seized by the jealous viceroy. The law offers her a chance of her life being spared if she can make a renegade of her paramour; instead of which she is by him converted to the Christian faith, and baptised when both think their last hour is at hand. The repentant Grimaldi however saves them by a bold enterprise, and thus enables the play to end as a 'tragi-comedy.' The humour of Vitelli's servant Gazet, who in vain aspires after an office of confidence in the seraglio, is perhaps above the average of Massinger's comic passages.

The Parliament of Love (1624).

The Parliament of Love (licensed for the stage 1624) has come down to us in so imperfect a form, that it is perhaps hardly amenable to criticism as it stands. This comedy is however in no sense a pleasing production; Massinger probably lacked the lightness and play of fancy requisite for a developement of the conception which gives the comedy its name; and it is thus a mere tissue of intrigue, hardly relieved by conventionally comic passages. A MS. play bearing the same name existed, which was said to be by William Rowley; possibly the extant play was a joint composition.

The Roman Actor (1626).

The Roman Actor (licensed 1626) is a far more interesting work. It had considerable success; was much lauded by contemporary poets, and was revived by Betterton. Massinger himself declares that he 'ever held it as the most perfect birth of his Minerva,' and perhaps herein judged more correctly than is usual with poets when determining the relative merits of their own works. The subject is very happily chosen, and worked out with a sincerity of feeling for which it is not difficult to account. There was some boldness in making an actor the hero of a tragedy, and showing in his person how a true dignity of mind is sometimes to be found where the world is least disposed to seek it. It is perhaps hardly worth while to enquire to what extent the circumstances of the author's own age suggested the references to the difficulties besetting the actor's profession[1]. Enough

[1] See particularly i. 1.

that a worthy conception of a noble profession is frankly and courageously assumed[1], and exemplified in its representative, the Roman actor Paris. After being enabled by the favour of the Emperor Domitian to confront the timorous censures of the Senate upon the outspokenness of the theatre, to which feeble criticism will always give a personal interpretation[2], he falls a victim to the tyrant's jealousy provoked (nor unnaturally) by the infatuation with which the actor's art has inspired Domitian's chosen mistress, Domitia the divorced wife of Ælius Lamia. But the despot himself respects the artist in the supposed rival; and takes his life, as it were deferentially, in the course of a dramatic scene enacted by Paris and himself. This device of a play within the play, or rather a scene within the scene, is employed not less than thrice within the compass of this tragedy[3]; and yet so ingeniously is its use varied, and so effectively is a climax brought about in the series, that even in this respect the construction deserves high praise. The overthrow of Domitian himself, brought about by an episode of some power, though accompanied by an unnecessary display of ghosts, serves as a fitting close; and there is sufficient individuality in the character of the tyrant, and sufficient reality of passion in that of Domitia, to furnish impressive contrasts to the tranquil dignity, enhanced by effective opportunities for the display of his artistic power, of the hero of the tragedy.

[1] *Æsop.* For the profit, Paris,
And mercenary gain, they are things beneath us. . . .
Paris. Our aim is glory, and to leave our names
To aftertime.' (i. 1.)

[2] See Paris' fine apology, too long to quote, i. 3. 'We cannot help it,' is the burden of his defence, if what we present brings its moral home too keenly to the individual conscience.

[3] ii. 1, where the 'Cure of Avarice,' 'filch'd out of Horace' [*Sat.* ii. 3. 141 *seqq.*], fails to convert the old miser Philargus; iii. 2, where Paris as Iphis bewitches Domitia; and iv. 2, where the Emperor, determined to kill Paris, commands him to play

'but one short scene—that, where the lady
In an imperious way commands the servant
To be unthankful to his patron: when
My cue 's to enter, prompt me.'

The Great Duke of Florence (1627).

The Great Duke of Florence (licensed 1627), though of a very different cast, is likewise one of Massinger's best dramas. An air of refinement unusual in him graces this comedy, which treats of the generosity of Duke 'Cozimo' to his nephew Giovanni and his favourite Sanazarro, who each for his own purpose have sought to hide from him the truth as to the charms of Lidia, the daughter of Prince Giovanni's tutor[1]. The character of Lidia herself, though not wholly free from artificiality, is one of the few conceptions revealing a sense of true maidenly purity which the drama of this period furnishes; and there are passages in the play which approach—it cannot perhaps be said that they more than approach—to poetic pathos[2]. The humour of Calandrino, Giovanni's servant and a would-be courtier, is a favourable specimen of a hackneyed type[3].

The Maid of Honour (by 1632).

The Maid of Honour (of which the only extant old edition bears date 1632[4]) is a well-constructed play. The heroine is Camiola, who in her faithful love for Bertoldo (the natural brother of Roberto King of Sicily, and a Knight of Malta) rejects the imperious advances of the King's favourite Fulgentio. Bertoldo has fallen into captivity on a rash enterprise undertaken by him in a too ardent quest of glory, and sanctioned by the King only in order that he may rid himself of his brother. Though the King has forbidden the payment of his brother's ransom, fixed by the captor at an inordinate sum, Camiola sends the money by a faithful follower—and hitherto hope-

[1] Massinger seems to have borrowed part of the intrigue from the popular play of *A Knacke to Knowe a Knave* (cf. *ante*, p. 138).

[2] See *e.g.* Giovanni's speech (i. 1), 'For, had I been your equal,' &c.; and his farewell (as he thinks) to his hopes of happiness with her (v. 3).

[3] Calandrino at the close of the play obtains the Duke's consent to his marriage on the plea that he may thus supply a *desideratum* of the contemporary stage:

> 'Why the whole race
> Of such as can act naturally fools' parts
> Are quite worn out; and they that do survive
> Do only zany us.'

[4] Malone thinks this play identical with *The Honour of Women*, which appears in Sir H. Herbert's Office-book in 1628; but Gifford considers this doubtful, as a play by Massinger called *The Spanish Viceroy, or The Honour of Women*, was entered at Stationers' Hall in 1653.

less lover[1]—of her own. But the ransomed Bertoldo allows himself to be seduced from the oath of fidelity to Camiola—the condition of his ransom—by the passionate advances of the Duchess Aurelia, against whose interests his expedition was undertaken. The solution of this complication is of an unusual kind[2]; Camiola contents herself with the repentance of Bertoldo, and takes the vows as a nun, while he renounces all intentions of obtaining a dispensation from his own knightly vows of celibacy. This close adds a certain nobility to the play, and though the solution resorted to would certainly not be acceptable to a modern English audience, appears not to have interfered with its popularity. *The Maid of Honour* is decidedly to be reckoned among Massinger's more satisfactory efforts; and the comic character of 'Signior Sylli, a foolish self-lover,' is unusually diverting, especially his references to his family traditions[3]. The Page (ii. 2) is an example of a favourite type in Massinger.

The Picture (1629–30).

In *The Picture* (licensed 1629, and printed in the following year) we are once more taken back to one of those comedies of sheer intrigue of which the stage of this period is so wearisomely prolific. The fable of this play may, as the old quarto avers, be a 'true Hungarian story;' but whether or not Massinger invented the element of magic which gives its name to the play, he has not made such use of it as to render this comedy in any way remarkable[4].

[1] Adorni is a fine character spoilt; Massinger works too rapidly to take much thought of his minor characters, so long as they fit well into the action.

[2] 'For my part,' says Aurelia (v. 2), 'I cannot guess the issue;' and indeed the *dénouement* is only just sufficiently prepared to deprive it of the character of what is so hazardous in a serious action—a complete surprise.

[3] 'But I, as I have ever done, deal simply;
A mark of sweet simplicity, ever noted
In the family of the Syllis.' (i. 2.)

'*Fulg.* I like a sharp wit well.
Syl. I cannot endure it;
Nor any of the Syllis.' (ii. 2.)

[4] Mathias, a poor knight of Bohemia, on sallying forth to relieve his poverty by the fruits of warlike achievements, obtains from his friend Julio Baptista, 'a great,' or as he is in the play (i. 1) still more appropriately termed 'a general scholar,' a picture of his wife Sophia, possessing the magic property of changing its hues according to the variations of sentiment and conduct in the conjugal

The rather ingenious plot described below is not ineffectively worked out; though as usual Massinger has but little true pathos or humour at command for interesting us in the persons of the action, instead of merely stimulating curiosity by the turns of the action itself. The honest old councillor Eubŭlus is a good representative of a type much affected by Beaumont and Fletcher, and indeed by many other dramatists. The rascally courtiers Ubaldo and Ricardo are too offensive to be amusing[1].

The Emperor of the East (1631).

The Emperor of the East (licensed 1631) appears to have been at first ill received[2], but after being reproduced at Court, to have grown into favour. I should upon the whole be inclined to agree with the earlier and less favourable judgment. The plot of the play is an exceedingly free version of a curious chapter of Byzantine history

fidelity of its original. Husband and wife are at heart true to one another; but their fidelity is in either case exposed to sore temptations. Mathias' heroic exploits in the service of the King of Hungary bring him to the notice of the imperious Queen Honoria, whose haughty temper brooks no rivalry, and who on hearing Mathias' praises of his wife is moved by pride—not by love—to tempt him in person to infidelity, while at the same time seeking to seduce Sophia from the path of virtue by means of two lying courtiers, sent to her with false reports of her husband's conduct. Sophia is thus made to waver in her constancy; and the picture revealing to Mathias the condition of her mind, he is likewise about to give way to the supposed passion of the Queen. But Sophia's virtue is proof against such dangers as it is exposed to; and the two courtiers are deservedly caught in their own net. The Queen sees the error of her ways, and becomes the submissive wife of her uxorious husband; while Sophia, after reading Mathias a severe lesson on the wrongfulness of his jealous fears which caused him to provide himself with the test of the picture, is restored to happiness.

[1] It is however a good touch when on their bringing to Sophia the news of her husband's safety and prosperity, and her returning thanks to Heaven, Ubaldo (on evil thoughts intent) sagaciously observes,

'I do not like
This simple devotion in her; it is seldom
Practised among my mistresses.
Ricardo. Or mine.
Would they kneel to I know not who, for the possession
Of such inestimable wealth, before
They thank'd the bringers of it? the poor lady
Does want instruction.' (iii. 2.)

[2] See the *Prologue at Court:*

'And yet this poor work suffered by the rage
And envy of some Catos of the stage.'

—part of which might at first sight be, according to Gibbon's expression[1], 'deemed an incredible romance,' while an episode added to it by Greek inventiveness (the story of the apple) is, in the judgment of the same historian, 'fit only for *The Arabian Nights*, where something not very unlike it may be found[2].' But Massinger has not made any very successful use of the strange story of the life of the Empress Eudocia, or invested with any peculiar interest a character which well deserved original dramatic treatment. The struggle for supremacy between the Emperor Theodosius the Younger's sister Pulcheria and the youthful rival whom her influence has raised from the place of a suppliant to a share in the imperial throne, forms only an episode of the drama, instead of its central action. Theodosius' jealousy of his kinsman Paulinus, while at once ridiculous in its origin[3] and bombastic in its expression[4], is indeed tragic in its result, but is brought near the borders of comedy by the supposed paramour of the Empress being represented as an old gentleman laid up with the gout and otherwise the reverse of dangerous. This is taken advantage of to introduce an Empiric professing to cure all diseases—a poor attempt to create a diversion in Ben Jonson's manner. On the other hand, Massinger has with some humour parodied the old titles of Byzantine court etiquette[5] in the scene (i. 2) in which Pulcheria banishes the 'Projector,' the 'Minion of the Suburbs,' and the 'Master of the Habit and Manners'; and the same scene furnishes an interesting clue to the author's political opinions, which one would hardly have expected to find so vigorously expressed in a play performed at the Court of King Charles I[6]. Else-

[1] *Decline and Fall*, chap. xxxii. The subject was again dramatically treated by Lee in his *Theodosius, or The Force of Love* (cf. *infra*).

[2] See *The Story of the Three Apples* (Dalziels' *Illustrated Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, pp. 141 *seqq.*).

[3] 'All this pother for an apple,' as the flippant Flaccilla appropriately observes (iv. 5).

[4] See Theodosius' speech, *ib.*: 'What an earthquake I feel in me!'

[5] Of the ὀφφίκια τοῦ παλατίου τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως an exhaustive account will be found in J. H. Krause, *Die Byzantiner des Mittelalters*.

[6] '*Pulch.* Projector, I treat first
Of you and your disciples; you roar out,

where the Emperor is made to give expression to a nobly-conceived invective against the flattery which seeks to make kings believe themselves omnipotent[1]. Finally, it may be noticed that this play contains a lyric which appears to me of a beauty very unusual in Massinger, whose compositions of this kind are generally commonplace[2].

Massinger and Field's The Fatal Dowry (by 1632).

The Fatal Dowry (thought by Malone to have been produced before 1620, but not printed till 1632) was the joint work of Massinger and Field[3]. This play has enjoyed a considerable celebrity, owing in part to the fact that its plan was borrowed by Rowe for his popular tragedy of *The Fair Penitent*[4]. Massinger and Field's play, however, seems to me undeserving of very high admiration. If some of its characters possess more individuality than is ordinarily the case in Massinger's dramas, the action is less happily constructed than in many of his other plays. Our sympathy is certainly powerfully engaged at the outset on behalf both of the noble Charolais, who rather than allow his dead father's body to fall a prey to his creditors, himself submits to imprisonment, and of the

> All is the King's, his will above his laws;
> And that fit tributes are too gentle yokes
> For his poor subjects: whispering in his ear
> If he would have their fear, no man should dare
> To bring a salad from his country garden
> Without the paying gabel; kill a hen,
> Without excise: and that if he desire
> To have his children or his servants wear
> Their heads upon their shoulders, you affirm
> In policy 'tis fit the owner should
> Pay for them by the poll; or, if the prince want
> A present sum, he may command a city
> Impossibilities, and for non-performance
> Compel it to submit to any fine
> His officers shall impose. Is this the way
> To make our emperor happy?' &c.

[1] See Theodosius' speech (v. 2):

> 'Wherefore pay you
> Such adoration to a sinful creature?' &c.

[2] Eudocia's song 'Why art thou slow, thou rest of trouble, Death?' (v. 3).

[3] Mr. Collier thinks Gifford to have been hasty in attributing to Field, in this play, 'all that he thinks unworthy of Massinger.' See his Introduction to Field's *A Woman is a Weathercocke*, p. 3 (*Five Old Plays*).

[4] Cf. *infra*.

generous Rochfort, who, in striking contrast to his worthless successor in office, takes pity on the young man, and not only redeems him from bondage, but bestows on him, with an ample dowry, the hand of his beloved daughter Beaumelle. Romont, Charolais' blunt outspoken friend, is likewise a character drawn with unusual vigour, although of a sufficiently familiar type. But when, after this telling introduction, the real action of the play ensues, and Beaumelle falls a victim to the seductions of a contemptible fribble[1]—the son of the unjust judge Novall—her guilt is so little excusable, as hardly to be atoned for, in a dramatic sense, even by her repentance and death. In real life indeed a Novall may lead a Beaumelle astray; but such an amour is as aesthetically unpleasant as it is morally to be condemned; and a mightier wave of repentance than it was in the author's power to represent would be needed to wash off the double stain. But though hardly equal to the occasion, the closing scene of act iv, in which Beaumelle after a penitent confession is sentenced by her father and slain by her husband, is not without real feeling and power. The fifth act, on the other hand, in which Charolais justifies his conduct before a bench of judges, is merely rhetorical in conception and execution; the catastrophe, his death, is brought about so to speak inorganically, by the hand of a faithful follower of the seducer; and the moral drawn from the whole is to the last degree trite[2].

Massinger's A New Way to Pay Old Debts (before 1633).

Massinger's best known comedy is *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, acted before 1633 (when it was printed), and repeatedly revived on the stage, of which it may still be said to hold possession. This enduring popularity is probably due to two circumstances. In the first place, the central character of the comedy (Sir Giles Overreach) is

[1] A genuine Lord Foppington, down to the very 'O lard!' See iv. 1.

[2] 'We are taught
By this sad precedent, how just soever
Our reasons are to remedy our wrongs,
We are yet to leave them to their will and power,
That, to that purpose, have authority.'
(It is a lawyer who speaks.)

one of genuine dramatic force, and is developed through a succession of effectively contrasted situations, from the height of triumph to the depth of overthrow. Secondly, this play is remarkable for a strong didactic element, clothed in rhetoric of a very striking kind; and the combination of this feature with the former has always proved irresistible to the theatrical public. It has been already noticed that the conception of this comedy was probably in some degree suggested to Massinger by Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One*[1]; but while the construction of the plot remains essentially original, that of the central character of the play is wholly and entirely so.

Sir Giles Overreach is far from being a usurer of the ordinary type. As is said in the play[2]—

> 'To have a usurer that starves himself
> And wears a cloak of one and twenty years
> On a suit of fourteen groats, bought of the hangman,
> To grow rich, and then purchase, is too common;
> But this sir Giles feeds high, keeps many servants,
> Who must at his command do any outrage;
> Rich in his habit, vast in his expenses,
> Yet he to admiration still increases
> In wealth, and lordships.
> He frights men out of their estates
> And breaks through all law-nets, made to curb ill men,
> As they were cobwebs. No man dares reprove him.
> Such a spirit to dare, and power to do, were never
> Lodged so unluckily.'

He has, by encouraging his nephew's prodigality and obtaining bonds and mortgages from him, ruined the young man, as he has ruined every one with whom he has come into contact. He knows neither of scruples nor of pity; wisdom, except of the worldly kind, he holds in profound scorn—

> 'I would be worldly wise; for the other wisdom
> That doth prescribe us a well govern'd life

[1] *Vide ante*, p. 85. It is perhaps hardly necessary to point out the resemblances, which lie chiefly in the parallelism of the situations of Wellborn and Witgood, and in the behaviour of the creditors in both pieces before and after the turn in the fortunes of their debtor. Marrall the 'term-driver' in Massinger cannot be said to be borrowed from Dampit the 'trampler' in Middleton.

[2] ii. 2.

> And to do right to others, as ourselves,
> I value not an atom[1].'

He goads his neighbours into law-suits in order that, his being the longer purse, he may be able to ruin them and absorb their lands; he has a Justice of the Peace in his pay—

> 'So he serve
> My purposes, let him hang, or damn, I care not,
> Friendship is but a word[2];'—

he bids his henchman tempt the nephew whom he has pauperised to crimes which may bring him to the gallows; in all his doings and schemes he is a ruthless fiend, without even the one human fibre in his nature which even a Shylock or a Barabas possesses. For the end of his ambition is, after making himself the owner of unbounded wealth, to marry his daughter to a nobleman, and thus to enjoy his triumph over the lords and ladies whom he has beggared:

> 'There are ladies
> Of errant knights decay'd, and brought so low
> That for cast clothes and meat will gladly serve her.
> And 't is my glory, though I come from the city,
> To have their issue whom I have undone,
> To kneel to mine as bondslaves[3].'

But no love for his daughter is mixed in this design—and in a scene which is infinitely the most powerful of the play, ghastly though it be in conception, he bids her make light of her virgin purity in order to gain the end which he has in view[4].

[1] ii. 1. [2] *Ib.*

[3] *Ib.* And cf. iv. 1:

> 'Now, for these other piddling complaints
> Breath'd out in bitterness; as when they call me
> Extortioner, tyrant, cormorant, or intruder
> On my poor neighbour's right, or grand incloser
> Of what was common, to my private use;
> Nay, when my ears are pierced with widows' cries,
> And undone orphans wash with tears my threshold,
> I only think what 't is to have my daughter
> Right honourable; and 't is a powerful charm
> Makes me insensible of remorse, or pity,
> Or the least sting of conscience.'

[4] iii. 2.

It will thus be obvious that Massinger designed this character both with the view of painting a monster of moral iniquity, and with that of commenting on a social evil—as it seemed to them and to the classes to whose patronage they to a great extent looked—which much occupied the dramatists of this age. Sir Giles Overreach is made to declare that there ever has been

> 'a feud, a strange antipathy
> Between us and true gentry[1]'—

and it was thus sought to bring home by means of this terrible example the dangers threatening the nobility and gentry of the country from the usurpation of the wealthy commercial classes. In the end, however, the devices of Overreach are overthrown; for, as it is finely said,

> 'Hard things are compass'd oft by easy means,
> And judgment, being a gift derived from heaven,
> Though sometimes lodged in the hearts of worldly men,
> That ne'er consider from whom they receive it,
> Forsakes such as abuse the giver of it.
> Which is the reason that the politic
> And cunning statesman, that believes he fathoms
> The counsels of all kingdoms on the earth,
> Is by simplicity oft over-reach'd[2].'

The nephew finds 'a new way to pay his old debts'[3], the daughter marries the husband of her choice, and the two agents of the usurer's overthrow, the good Lord Lovell and the kind Lady Allworth, appropriately pair off together. The vile tool of the usurer, Marrall, after tricking his master out of his bond, is kicked off the stage, and Sir Giles Overreach himself goes mad. I mention this last effect thus incidentally, because it is introduced rather as a stage device than with any real power of writing. Indeed, even in the finest passages of this play there is evidence of the *effort* generally traceable in Massinger;

[1] Cf. Heywood's *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, ii. 2:

> 'thou bloodhound, that dost hunt
> The dear, dear life of noble gentry.'

[2] v. 1.

[3] iv. 1.

while the comic character of Justice Greedy is commonplace enough.

The City Madam (1632).

The City Madam (licensed 1632), though to some degree cognate in sentiment with *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, is not like it distinguished by any character of real dramatic power. Luke Frugal, who from a prodigal has become a recipient of his brother's charity, and as such has hypocritically assumed the character of a submissive and benevolent dependant, while ingratiating himself impartially with the well-disposed and the evil-disposed alike[1], is subjected to the test of the sudden inheritance of all his brother's wealth, on the pretended retirement of the latter into a monastery. He is at once transformed into a monster of selfish avarice, who on the promise of untold gains even consents to send his sister-in-law and her daughters to Virginia, to be offered up as sacrifices to the Devil himself! In the end his brief dream of wealth and power of course collapses; and the trials to which they have been subjected entirely cure his brother's wife (the 'City Madam') and her daughters of their ridiculous pride and pretensions. The character of Luke Frugal is drawn without real art; but the sketches of the pretentious city ladies—a 'famille Bénoiton' of other days—of the idle and worse than idle apprentices, and of divers personages varying in degrees of disreputableness, are not unentertaining, and recall similar productions of Middleton. By way of contrast, the honest country-gentleman Plenty gives a pleasing picture of a more wholesome condition of existence[2].

The Guardian (1633).

From the Prologue to *The Guardian* (licensed 1633) it appears that Massinger had, after producing two plays without success, abstained for two years from bringing anything on the stage; and the Epilogue too betrays some want of confidence in the success of this particular comedy. It cannot be very highly praised, though the complications of the plot, which is one of a common,

[1] His advice to the apprentices (ii. 1) comes very near to that of the Unjust Steward in the New Testament.

[2] See his speech, ''Tis quite contrary,' &c. (i. 2).

though to the modern reader unpleasing, species, are cleverly enough unravelled. The bluff old gentleman who gives the title to the play cannot be described as the exponent of a very praiseworthy morality. The honourable system obtaining among the banished Severino's band of outlaws isa notion probably taken from a Spanish source[1], though it also recalls the traditions of Robin Hood.

A Very Woman (1634).

A Very Woman, or The Prince of Tarent (licensed 1634) declares itself in the Prologue to be a new version of an earlier play, which has been ingeniously supposed by Mr. Dyce[2] to be *A Right Woman* by Fletcher[3]. Mr. Fleay has recently supported this view with the aid of his 'verse-test;' and there can be no doubt that there is considerable probability in the supposition. Not only is the versification frequently quite in Fletcher's manner, but a passionate flow of language occasionally suggests the same conclusion[4]. The psychological problem which the title announces is the change which may (against the laws of strict logic) be wrought in a woman's heart by patient devotion, even on the part of one whom she has previously rejected in favour of a rival; and this theme is worked out with considerable power. The Prince of Tarent, who in

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 78, as to Middleton and W. Rowley's *Spanish Gipsy*.

[2] It is happily introduced in the first scene of the play by Almira's declaring herself loth to lose 'The privilege of my sex, which is my will' in order 'to yield a reason like a man.'

[3] Cf. *ante*, p. 235.

[4] See *e.g.* Cardenes' speech (i. 1): 'No, I'll be plainer,' &c.; and most especially Antonio's narrative (iv. 3): 'Not far from where my father lives,' &c. The bold poetic beauty of such a passage as Almira's answer to her cousin who attempts to convince her that Cardenes is not dead—

> 'I know you,
> And that in this you flatter me; he 's dead,
> As much as would die of him:—but look yonder!
> Amongst a million of glorious lights
> That deck the heavenly canopy, I have
> Discern'd his soul, transform'd into a star.
> Do not you see it?'—

seems equally beyond Massinger, and appropriate to Fletcher. Of the fine lines defining 'the height of Honour' (iv. 1) there seems no reason to deny the credit to Massinger.

the first act has wounded—as he thinks to death—his favoured rival Cardenes, contrives in the guise of a slave to win the love which as a prince he could not obtain. Cardenes, on the other hand, is by his illness and its cure[1] converted to a philosophy which teaches him at once to resign and to forgive. The comic element in this play is supplied by the drunken Borachia, whose indomitable love of wine is presented after a most unsavoury fashion.

The Bashful Lover (1636).

The Bashful Lover (licensed 1636) is stated to have been well received and to have been frequently acted. No other of Massinger's plays more commends itself by an effective mixture of abundant incident and noble sentiment than this romantic drama, which from a theatrical point of view well deserved the success it achieved. Two plots are skilfully combined in it—the one being concerned with Honorio's modest love for the Princess Matilda, the other with the wronged Maria's recovery of her repentant seducer. In Honorio, whose timidly reverential love conceals a chivalrous spirit capable of great deeds, but who even after performing them is ready to renounce his reward for the sake of her whom he loves, Massinger furnishes a nobler type of character than is usual either with him or with most of his contemporaries; and in the adventures of Ascanio-Maria he has a subject in itself as pathetic as any of Beaumont and Fletcher's (the situation in Octavio's retreat vaguely resembles that of Imogen's refuge in *Cymbeline*). The course of the action is in either case determined in favour of the right; and the conqueror of Matilda's father, who has the Princess herself in his power, pays a tribute to

[1] He for a time loses his senses and is restored by the art of the physician Paulo. Massinger here finds another opportunity for extolling a profession in which he seems to have taken a strong interest. Cf. *The Emperor of the East* (iv. 4) and *The Bashful Lover* (v. 1). Paulo's request that a college for physicians of the right stamp may be founded as the only recompense which he asks for his cure of the prince, may contain an allusion to the Royal College of Physicians in London. It is possible that Massinger may have derived the first idea of the episode of the prince's malady and cure from Ford's *Lover's Melancholy* (1628); on the other hand, it may have been in either case taken from *A Right Woman*; and at all events, Massinger's treatment wholly differs from Ford's.

virtue surpassing the traditional self-denial of Scipio. If in spite of all this the play is likely to leave the reader cold, the reason is to be sought in the fact that the rhetorical genius of Massinger could not even with such a subject as this pass beyond its bounds; there is too much argument, too much unction, and too much protesting in the dialogue, while with so many opportunities at hand, no situation is ever seized and realised with a genuinely impressive force. Such is my opinion of a work which for elevation of sentiment deserves a more than passing notice among the productions of the later Elisabethan drama.

Believe as you List (1631).

Believe as you List was supposed to have been one of the lost plays of Massinger, till it was fortunately recovered in 1844[1]. It is beyond all doubt the play which in 1631 Sir Henry Herbert refused to license 'because it did contain dangerous matter, as the deposing of Sebastian, King of Portugal, by Philip II, and there being a peace sworn 'twixt the Kings of England and Spain.' Don Sebastian's adventures had been made known to English readers in a narrative published in 1602; but in 1630 the relations between England and Spain were of a very delicate nature, and King Charles I was attempting once more to play the balancing game which had landed his father's policy in a slough of despond[2].

The hero of this tragedy is 'Antiochus, King of the Lower Asia, a fugitive' at Carthage, who after his defeat by the Romans is supposed to have taken flight to India, where he 'spent many years with the gymnosophists,' and who now after two-and-twenty years of wanderings reappears to make known his identity. The Carthaginians are in doubt whether to place credit in him; but the Roman ambassador Flaminius prevails, and King Antiochus seeks a refuge with King Prusias of Bithynia. Pursued

[1] It was edited for the Percy Society in 1848 by Mr. Crofton Croker, and has since been reprinted in a more correct form by Col. Cunningham, to whom belongs the merit of identifying its subject with the story of Don Sebastian. See his Introductory Notice, p. xiv.

[2] England was at peace with Spain and yet had a species of understanding with Gustavus Adolphus, who had entered Germany in the summer of 1630. See Ranke, *Englische Geschichte*, ii. 174.

to this court by the Roman, he is delivered up to his implacable foe. Flaminius craftily endeavours to make him renounce his claims—employing the wiles of a courtesan for the purpose—but the royal sufferer remains firm. In the end he is recognised as the true Antiochus by a Roman proconsul and his wife to whom he had of old showed high favour at his court, and Flaminius is disgraced; but the King himself is doomed to death[1].

The theme of *Believe as you List* is eminently suitable for tragic treatment, and indeed in some sense belongs to a class of subjects which has proved attractive to more than one dramatist of mark[2]. It will however be observed that Massinger (notwithstanding the title of his play) has no intention of leaving any doubt as to the true royalty of his hero, upon whose martyr-like dignity he has concentrated the interest of his drama, while the energy of Flaminius and his 'intelligence department' are made correspondingly odious. The scene in which the imprisoned

[1] It is hardly worth while to observe that no such adventures ever befell any Antiochus, and that the historical names and relations mixed up in the action are a mere deception which 'any schoolboy' could expose. Indeed in his Prologue the author warns the audience that if they

> 'find what's Roman here,
> Grecian or Asiatic, draw too near
> A late and sad example, 'tis confest
> He's but an English scholar; at his best
> A stranger to cosmography, and may err
> In the country's names, the shape and character
> Of the person he presents'—

and, as already observed, Antiochus is really no other than King Sebastian of Portugal, the son of a daughter of Charles V, whose expedition against Morocco ended in the terrible massacre of his whole army. Whether he had himself fallen on the field of battle, remained doubtful; and not less than four persons afterwards made their appearance in Portugal, which had fallen into the hands of Spain, claiming to be the lost Sebastian. One of these appeared twenty years after the battle, and after many strange adventures was consigned to the galleys at Naples and died either here or in imprisonment in Castile. The mysterious fate of Don Sebastian is referred to in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wit at Several Weapons* (i. 2). — As to Dryden's *Don Sebastian* see below, chap. ix.

[2] See below as to Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*.—'All ages,' says Flaminius (ii. 2),

> 'have been furnished
> With such as have usurped upon the names
> And persons of dead princes.'

and famished King is touched by the supposed compassion of his female visitor, till he recognises in her a vile agent of his enemy's craft (iv. 2), is powerful in conception; and considerable skill is shown in the contrivance of the catastrophe, where after being recognised by Marcellus and his wife, the King is consigned to death by the very man who has been honourable enough to acknowledge his identity. Altogether, it is fortunate that this interesting play should have been recovered to add to the list of Massinger's worthiest efforts.

Of *The Old Law* (in which Massinger is said to have co-operated with Middleton and William Rowley, contributing in Gifford's opinion 'not the most considerable share') mention has already been made among Middleton's plays[1].

Massinger's moral earnestness an element in his dramatic power.

Massinger appears to me to furnish a signal illustration of a connexion between cause and effect on which it is unfortunately necessary to insist. The moral dignity of his sentiment is at once the basis and the source of much of his highest dramatic effectiveness. This observation seems even more applicable to some of his later plays than to such a production as *The Virgin Martyr*, where the nature of the subject almost necessarily implies the nature of its treatment. In Massinger we seem to recognise a man who firmly believes in the eternal difference between right and wrong, and never swerves aside from the canon he acknowledges. It may be, as already said, that this condition of mind was in Massinger's case strengthened by the fact of his having sought the support of a form of Christianity which is more unwilling than any other to allow its adherents to walk alone. In any case Massinger's morality is solidly founded and consistently maintained.

His themes and the principles they illustrate.

In Massinger's plays the conflict between lust and chastity is a frequent theme, though by no means in the same degree as in other of our Elisabethan dramatists. Fortitude inspired by religious conviction; endurance steeled by the consciousness of a righteous cause; tyranny punished by

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 72.

its own excess; self-control rising superior to the command of irresistible authority; woman's readiness for self-sacrifice as reconcileable with her purity, man's victorious endeavour to resist the potent influence of passion,—such are among the motive agencies which he represents as moral forces determining the course of life. The poet—and indeed the historian likewise—who fails to see that forces such as these are elements at least as appreciable in their results as gusts of passion on the one hand, and accumulations of physical powers on the other, is likely to take a very one-sided view of the scheme of human life. Massinger's strength lies to no small extent in his apprehension of these moral forces.

His defectiveness in characterisation,

He is less successful in exhibiting the phases of a moral conflict by means of the dramatic developement of character, and thus cannot be said to satisfy the highest test of dramatic power. He generally displays a laudable wish to present virtue under a pleasing and vice under an unlovely aspect; but he lacks variety of light and shade in the endeavour to reproduce his design under the artistic form which he has chosen. His personages seem for the most part labelled with the qualities they are intended to represent; there is no mistaking them as *dramatis personae*, but there is some difficulty in understanding them as human beings. Thus Hazlitt observes, doubtless with some degree of exaggeration, that Massinger's 'villains are a sort of *lusus naturae;* his impassioned characters are like drunkards or madmen.' This want of art in characterisation partly springs from the absence of humour noticeable in Massinger; in comedy he is rarely successful, except where he passes beyond its proper sphere; but if the character of Sir Giles Overreach must be allowed to be powerfully conceived and still more powerfully executed, I should certainly decline to follow Hallam in describing the central figure of *A City Madam* (Luke) as a 'masterly delineation.' Massinger's minor comic characters are as a rule either purely conventional, or simply repulsive as faithful portraitures of disgusting vice. If he lacks humour, he is, as most critics have agreed, even more deficient in tragic

in humour,

and in tragic passion.

passion. No whirlwind of emotion seems to sweep through his long declamations, no fire to burn beneath his ample and at times luxurious eloquence. The sieges which his villains lay to chastity are really conducted like military operations; and so at times is the defence. A certain coldness seems to belong even to his noblest conceptions and most earnest moments. From the Virgin Martyr to the ill-used royal fugitive (in *Believe as you List*) there is something wanting in the most powerful situations and in the most attractive characters of this author to excite the deepest sympathy,—to move the source of tears.

Rhetorical character of his genius.

The genius of Massinger is essentially rhetorical. In illustration of this, I may point to a curious peculiarity marking the construction of several of his plays. He likes nothing better than to work up the action to the reality or semblance of what may be described as a judicial issue, thus obtaining an excellent opportunity for statement and counter-statement, accusation and defence, and final judicial summary. Probably the consciousness of his rhetorical powers tended to make him so frequently create such occasions for their exercise[1]. But he has another minor note of the rhetorician. This is his frequent recurrence to little phrases and turns of expression which he may be said to have made his own, and the use of which is, so to speak, part of his stock-in-trade. I am not aware that this habit is so marked in any other dramatist as in Massinger; as an illustration of his manner it may at least go for what it is worth[2].

His diction,

In general, the style of Massinger is full rather than rich, and possesses the qualities of a flowing eloquence rather than of impassioned poetry. Hallam has compared the effect produced by the redundancy of his style to what by painters is called *impasto*. Pleasing and appropriate

[1] So besides *The Parliament of Love* (where a trial naturally springs out of the plot), in *The Great Duke of Florence*, in *The Maid of Honour*, and twice in *The Fatal Dowry*.

[2] I refer to such phrases as 'to wash an Æthiop;' an 'embryon' for an 'unperfected design;' to 'cry aim;' and the phrase about 'friends, though two bodies, having but one soul.'

imagery is by no means rare in Massinger; but he has few similes which seize lastingly on the memory, and for one or two of these he was perhaps indebted to Shakspere[1], from whom however he appears to have borrowed far less than Beaumont and Fletcher did. In versification, he holds the mean between the manner of Shakspere's maturity and the mellifluous cadence of Fletcher[2]. In construction, he appears to me a skilful artist, less prone than most of his contemporaries to a wearisome alternation in the conduct of two parallel plots to a combined issue; indeed many of his plays—and it is to their advantage—are virtually constructed on the lines of a single plot. Finally, it should be pointed out that, while as yet little has been done even by Gifford to explore the sources of the subjects of Massinger's plays, their variety is incontestable. The learning which he expends upon the treatment of a subject novel by the nature of its time or locality—such as *The Emperor of the East*, or *The Roman Actor*, or *Believe as you List*—is never very considerable; and historical accuracy is far from being one of his foibles; but he is not without skill in casting an attractive outward garment of time and place round his actions, and in the versatility which he displayed in his choice of plots must doubtless be sought one of the causes of his success as a dramatist. He is not, I think, to be ranked among the greatest of Shakspere's successors; but in the absence of some high poetic gifts he may be said to have compassed the noblest results which as a dramatist it lay within his power to achieve, and to have exercised his art—take his works for all in all—in such a spirit as to do honour to it and to himself.

and versification.

His constructive skill.

His various and frequently happy choice of subjects.

NATHANIEL FIELD, who has already been mentioned as the companion of Massinger at a period of sore straits for both and for their friend Daborne, and as joint author with Massinger of *The Fatal Dowry*, began his connexion with the stage as one of the Children of the

Nathaniel Field (1590 *circ.*–1640 *circ.*).

His life.

[1] See Ferriar's Essay in Gifford, i. p. cxxxii.

[2] Cf. *ante*, p. 247.

Revels. In this capacity he acted in several of Jonson's plays from 1600, and was still engaged in 1609. He afterwards became a prominent member of the Blackfriars company, and was highly complimented as an actor by Ben Jonson in his *Bartholomew Fair* (1614)[1]. At an earlier point in his career he had distinguished himself by the performance of the character of the hero in *Bussy d'Ambois* (seemingly at its production in 1607); and this may help to account for the good-will displayed towards 'his loved son, Nat. Field' by Chapman in some rather crabbed commendatory lines (containing of course a reference to Homer) prefixed to *A Woman is a Weather-cocke*. Nothing certain is known of the later years of Field's life.

His character as a dramatist influenced by his personal experience.

Of his two extant plays the one just named was published in 1612, when its author was still a young man[2]. Indeed, the tone of the humorous Dedication[3] and of the Address to the Reader, as well as the style of the comedy itself, bespeak the confidence of youth. Both this play and *Amends for Ladies* (printed in 1618), though the latter is intended to be antithetical to the former in tendency, are characterised by a curious combination of recklessness and skilfulness which the circumstances of Field's career may help to explain. He evidently knew his audience as well as he knew his stage, and could safely indulge in the freedom permitted to an acknowledged favourite.

Both of these plays mingle serious elements with comic; but in the earlier the serious passages are overlaid with an excess of rhetorical invective, while in both the comic passages are in part extremely coarse. The construction is however easy and effective in the later (and more complicated) as well as in the earlier drama; and the wit of the author is frequently very pointed and fresh. *A Woman is a Weather-cocke* tells the story of a faithless Cressid, who

A Woman is a Weather-cock (1612).

[1] 'Your best actor, your Field.' (v. 3.)

[2] Both of Field's plays are printed, with introductory remarks, in Mr. Collier's *Five Old Plays* (1833).

[3] 'I did determine,' it begins, 'not to have dedicated my play to any body, because forty shillings I care not for'—certainly, as Mr. Collier reminds us, a rather awkward boast under the light of Field's joint application to Henslowe (probably made in the next year).

is however brought back to her lover by his persistency and with the aid of a tolerably unscrupulous friend, who has rendered her marriage with the wealthy Count Frederick futile by the ingenious device of performing it himself in the priest's robes. Interwoven with this intrigue are two under-plots—in one of which the merchant Strange very vigorously brings to book the asperser of his bride's honour, Captain Ponts, while in the other Sir Abraham Ninny (a kind of Sir Andrew Aguecheek—'my father is a Ninny, and my mother was a Hammer') falls a victim to the energy of Mistress Wagtail. The progress of the main plot itself would be more interesting, had the author understood how to put a little more pathos, and consideraby less rant, into the hero's complaints against the fickleness of woman.

Amends for Ladies (1618.)

It was to make 'Amends' to a sex never very tolerant of satire against itself that Field, as he had promised in the Dedication to his earlier piece, produced his other comedy[1]. *Amends for Ladies* displays in the persons of the Ladies Honor, Perfect, and Bright the virtues most appropriate to their several conditions, by which they are called throughout the play,—of Maid, Wife, and Widow. While recognising the author's good intentions, the reader will not find much pleasure in the means chosen for testing the excellence of the last two of the trio[2]; but the self-sacrificing fidelity of the Maid is touchingly exhibited. The treble plot is managed with considerable skill; and apart from objections on which it is unnecessary to dwell, the comedy merits high praise as an effective and in its design healthy work. A character with whom we have met before—the heroine of Middleton and Dekker's *Roaring*

[1] I am not sure that the Wife's complaint (ii. 2) might not justly be echoed by the women of another age and country, in view of the dramatic comments on their failings with which their censors have lately overflowed:

> 'Oh, men! what are you? why is our poor sex
> Still made the disgrac'd subjects in these plays
> For vices, folly and inconstancy,
> When, were men look'd into with such critical eyes
> Of observation,' &c. (ii. 2.)

[2] The plot in reference to the Wife is borrowed, according to Mr. Collier, from the novel of the *Curioso Impertinente* in *Don Quixote*.

Girle—is very unnecessarily introduced into one of the scenes (ii. 1) by way of an incidental attraction (though she is here represented in an unfavourable light). Another special gratification for the audience (which likewise seems to be referred to in the title-page of the edition of 1639) was doubtless intended by the scene (iii. 4) where Lord Feesimple is taught the art of 'roaring'—a scene the broad humour and the coarseness of which is hardly surpassed by anything similar in Smollett[1]. It is to be regretted that good taste should be offended by passages far less endurable than even this in a play so excellent in purpose and in many respects so admirable in execution.

John Ford (1586–1640 *circ.*).

His life and non-dramatic works.

JOHN FORD[2] was born in 1586, the second son of a Devonshire gentleman of position and his wife the sister of Attorney-General, afterwards Lord Chief-Justice, Popham. Towards the end of 1602 he was entered at the Middle Temple, while his cousin and namesake (to whom one of his plays is dedicated) was a member of Gray's Inn. In 1606 Ford made his first public appearance as an author, with an elegiac poem called *Fame's Memorial* in honour of the recently deceased Charles Earl of Devonshire, to whose widow it was dedicated. The circumstance is to the credit of Ford's independence of spirit; for the Earl had died under the cloud of royal disfavour and public scandal, arising from his marriage with a lady well fitted to be the heroine of one of Ford's own dramas[3]; nor was the tribute paid by the poet to her still more unfortunate brother—

> 'Renown'd Devereux, whose awkward fate
> Was misconceited by foul envy's hate'—

[1] Another nobleman who appears in this piece (Lord Proudly) is not a contemptible character; but there is a striking degree of severity in the comments (iv. 4) on the impunity attaching to noble offenders against the law in the matter of duels. Outbursts of this kind are so rare in this age as to make this vigorous passage worth pointing out.

[2] *The Works of John Ford.* With Notes [and an Introduction] by W. Gifford. New Edition, revised, with Additions; by the Rev. Alexander Dyce (3 vols., 1869).—*The Fortnightly Review* for July, 1871, contains a fine criticism of Ford by Mr. A. C. Swinburne.

[3] The famous Penelope Lady Rich. The poem seems to me above the average of such works; the closing stanza is particularly fine.

likely to commend him to the good-will of the powers that were. In this poem Ford alludes to his own love-troubles and their cause—'flint-hearted Lycia,' of whom nothing further is known. He may be supposed not long afterwards to have begun his career as a dramatist; the names remain of several plays written by him in conjunction with others (two with Dekker, one with Webster) and alone. But, according to his own statement, the earliest of his published plays was *The Lover's Melancholy*, printed in 1629. He seems to have enjoyed the patronage or good-will of several men of rank,—among them the well-known Earl (afterwards Duke) of Newcastle, the famous Lord Craven, and the Earl of Peterborough[1]. His tract of *Honor Triumphant, or The Peeres Challenge*, written on the occasion of some Barriers at Court, and published as early as 1606, likewise shows his connexion with the upper ranks of society. Towards the public he appears to have assumed an attitude of independence[2] and self-consciousness[3]; among the fellow-authors from whom tributes in his honour remain are Shirley and Crashaw, while he was himself among those who honoured the name of Jonson by a joint garland of memorial verse[4]. In a contemporary poem[5] his tendency to seclusion and melancholy seems to be ridiculed; and according to Gifford, faint traditions in the neighbourhood of his birth-place (Ilsington in North Devon) point to his having retired thither after closing his labours as a dramatist and perhaps as a lawyer or legal agent (for he was never called to the Bar). At the time of the production of his *Fancies Chaste and Noble* he appears to have been travelling abroad[6]; this play is thought to have been licensed in 1637; for in the following

[1] See the Dedications of *Perkin Warbeck*, *The Broken Heart*, and *'Tis Pity*.

[2] See the Dedication and the Epilogue of *The Lover's Melancholy*.

[3] See the fine Prologue and the Epilogue to *The Broken Heart*.

[4] Ford's contribution to *Jonsonus Virbius* is entitled *On the Best of English Poets, Ben Jonson, deceased*.

[5] *Time's Poets*.

[6] See Prologue:

'If traduc'd by some,
'Tis well, he says, he's far enough from home.'

year Ford brought out *The Lady's Trial*, after which date no further record remains of him.

The Lover's Melancholy (1628).

The Lover's Melancholy (acted in 1628, and printed in the following year) was, according to the author's own account, the first dramatic work 'of his that ever courted reader.' An apocryphal anecdote attributes to Ben Jonson, whose *New Inn* had failed shortly after Ford's play had succeeded, the charge that the latter was stolen from Shakspere's papers. The story is a late and baseless invention [1]; nor is there anything in the play itself to lend colour to it. The plot is indeed not without 'reminiscences' of Shakspere, in so far that the madness of the hero at times recalls Hamlet, and the gentle sweetness of the heroine, disguised as a page like Viola, cannot fail to bring to mind a character nowhere more worthily paralleled. But Palladio's madness is the result of hopeless love; and the situation of Eteocles is quite different from that of Viola [2]. From a famous non-dramatic work of the time, on the other hand, Ford, 'claiming a scholar's right [3],' borrowed the entire notion of an interlude on the subject of the different species of madness, as well as another passage leading up to the exhibition [4]. To another source he avowed himself indebted for the story told in a famous passage in the early part of the play [5].

The physiological mask which Burton's work had suggested to Ford might in truth have well been spared.

[1] According to Gifford it was raked up by Macklin, who revived *The Lover's Melancholy* in 1748 (see the Introduction to Jonson's *New Inn*). It had already been discredited by Malone in a dissertation, *Shakspeare, Ford and Ben Jonson*. Endymion Porter's epigram, on which Gifford expends his ire, can hardly be said to have as much truth as it has point:

'Quoth Ben to Tom: the Lover's stole;
'Tis Shakspeare's every word;
Indeed, says Tom, upon the whole,
'Tis much too good for Ford.'

[2] Gifford has pointed out the resemblance between *The Lover's Melancholy* and Massinger's *A Very Woman* in part of the plot. But see *ante*, p. 286, note.

[3] See *Prologue*.

[4] In iii. 1. The mask is in the following scene.

[5] *viz.*, the famous version of the story of the nightingale's death, taken from Strada's *Prolusiones Academicae* (i. 1). Parthenophil certainly plays, if I may be pardoned for saying so, a rather silly part in this narrative.

The merits of the play lie neither in this second-hand effort of ingenuity, nor in the comic characters, which may be a trifle more entertaining than is usual with Ford's characters of this description, but which the trenchant Gifford is justified in terming a 'despicable set of buffoons.' These merits are to be found in the tender pathos of some of the earlier parts of the play, and in the harmonious close given to it by the justly-commended last scene, where Meleander is gently restored from the gloomy madness of despair to perfect happiness on the recovery of his daughter. Upon the whole, however, though in passages of *The Lover's Melancholy* the pathos seems to well up from the very depths of human nature[1], and though its sentiment is better guarded from the danger of passing into mere sentimentality than the opening might lead one to expect this work is to be regarded as one of high promise rather than of matured excellence.

'Tis Pity She 's a Whore (pr. 1633).

Over Ford's next play it is necessary to pass with a single expression of regret, or indeed of indignation, that a desire to produce a strong sensation (for it is idle to suppose any other motive) should have led the author to treat such a theme. If *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (printed 1633), as its title implies, be meant to awaken a feeling akin to sympathy for the heroine of its horrible story, it fails, in my judgment, of its object. The deadly impression this tragedy seeks to leave is that the force of passion is irresistible; but the mind revolts against the fatalism which, in spite of the friar's preaching and Annabella's repentance, the sum-total of the action implies. The poison may be dissolved in a cup of sweetness, and the cup may be offered, as I think it might be shown to be in this instance, by no reckless hand, but the draught remains poison, and those who recognise it as such are bound to make no secret of their conviction.

[1] As in Thamasta's sudden cry 'Kala, O, Kala!' (i. 3), and Palladio's deep-drawn lament (iv. 3):

> 'Parthenophil is lost, and I would see him;
> For he is like to something I remember
> A great while since, a long, long time ago.'

The Broken Heart (pr. 1633).

The Broken Heart (printed in 1633, with a dedication to the famous Lord Craven [1]) is one of the plays by which Ford's gifts as a dramatist may be most fairly judged. The origin of the story on which it is founded is unknown; but unless the Prologue's assertion that the plot is based on fact is to be taken literally, its source is probably some nearly contemporary novel. Either Ford or the novelist from whom he borrowed made little account of historical probability in choosing Sparta as the scene of a love-tragedy which savours of mediaeval Italy.

The extraordinary plot of this tragedy, which as an instance of Ford's complicated but not obscure method of construction I have briefly sketched in a note below [2],

[1] Appropriate no doubt from one point of view, though one may be pardoned for remembering that the chivalrous knight-errant and (as is thought) secret husband of Elisabeth of Bohemia survived her for nearly a quarter of a century.

[2] A youthful pair of lovers, Orgilus and Penthea, have been separated by the ambition of the lady's valorous brother, the Spartan general Ithocles. He has caused Penthea to marry Bassanes, a jealous dotard whose insane suspiciousness of itself suffices to drive the suffering Penthea to distraction. Ithocles bitterly repents his act; and the reader is at first led to suppose (see iii. 2) that Penthea's is the broken heart of which the play is to tell. Orgilus, in order to gain access to Penthea, has pretended a journey to Athens, while in reality remaining at Sparta in the disguise of a pupil of philosophy in the school of the wise Tecnicus. In an interview with Penthea he however learns that there is no hope left for him—she loves him still, but will not stain her honour by breaking the loathsome bond to which she is condemned. Revenge against Ithocles, the original author of his and Penthea's misery, now becomes the object of the life of Orgilus. Ithocles is enamoured of the princess Calantha, whose hand her royal father wishes to bestow upon the prince of Argos; and in order to further his revenge, Orgilus urges on this desperate suit. Calantha, sweetly persuaded by the supplications of Penthea, returns the affection of Ithocles; and Orgilus is resolved to prepare for them a misery like that to which he has been doomed himself.

Thus the situation is wrought up towards the climax. The death of the gentle Penthea, who has lost her reason but with her dying breath bewails her lover's wretchedness and her brother's cruelty, determines Orgilus to accomplish his purpose. This he effects by a strangely realistic device (originally it would seem recorded by Pausanias, and introduced by Bandello into one of his novels, whence it also appears to have been borrowed by a dramatist of the name of Barnaby Barnes into his *The Devil's Charter* (1607); see Dyce's note *ad loc.*). In the presence of the wronged Penthea's corpse Ithocles is inveigled into a chair so contrived as to hold fast the sitter in an inextricable grasp; and then Orgilus stabs his victim, who dies without a groan. Meanwhile a festival is in progress at Court, over which the King being mortally sick has asked his daughter Calantha to preside. While she is leading the measure, the tidings

is in truth the story not of one, but of three broken hearts, and offers a surfeit of sadness. The characters are, with the exception of Ithocles and Calantha, both of whom are nobly conceived, hardly worked out with adequate force; nor is the progress in the mind of Orgilus from despair to the resolve of vengeance very subtly traced, though on the other hand the momentary calm with which he lures his victim to his doom is most strikingly effective. Neither is the character of Penthea wholly satisfactory; there is, as Gifford has also taken occasion to point out, a trace of selfishness in her sorrow which operates against the sympathy excited by her sufferings. In the character of Bassanes, the jealous husband, doting folly is suddenly,

are brought to her first of her father's death, then of Penthea's, then of that of her beloved Ithocles—the last message being whispered to her by the murderer himself. But in each case she orders the dance to proceed; and then calmly causing the intelligence to be repeated to her, bids the self-confessed assassin make himself ready for death, and orders her coronation—for she is now Queen—to be proceeded with. We are thus prepared for the final situation. In the last act, all are assembled for the solemnity, when Calantha, clad in her royal robes, proclaims her last will, making over her kingdom to the Argive prince and disposing of the great offices of State. She then declares that the oracle (sent from Delphos by Tecnicus) which had darkly foretold all the incidents of the catastrophe is fulfilled in its last clause also that 'the Lifeless Trunk shall wed the Broken Heart,'—for placing a ring on the finger of the corpse of Ithocles, she sinks dead by his side. As she passes away, a dirge is heard—

'Glories, pleasures, pomps, delight and ease
Can but please
Th' outward senses, when the mind
Is or untroubled or by peace refin'd—
Crowns may flourish and decay,
Beauties shine, but fade away.
Youth may revel, yet it must
Lie down in a bed of dust.
Earthly honours flow and waste,
Time alone doth change and last.
Sorrows mingled with contents prepare
Rest for care;
Love only reigns in death; though art
Can find no comfort for a BROKEN HEART.'

It may be added that Hazlitt (*Lectures on Dr. Lit.*, p. 184) has pointed out the resemblance between the scene in which Calantha receives the news of the deaths during the dance, and the scene of the mask in Marston's *Malcontent*. It is indeed clear that Ford borrowed the notion from Marston; but I am not so sure that Hazlitt is right in calling Ford's 'an ill-judged copy.'

and not very explicably, succeeded by conscientious repentance; and the remaining personages are more or less conventional.

What enchains our admiration in this play is, firstly, the skill of its construction, which to me at least seems very considerable; secondly and principally, the pathos of particular scenes[1]. In the last act Ford shows himself equal to the conduct of a situation of terrible intensity; in the scenes concerned with Penthea he is true to his most special gift, the power of revealing the depths of the grief of a woman doomed to hopeless misery. Thus the play, though far from perfect, is typical of its author's powers as exerted to the utmost of their capability. It should be added that not only the concluding dirge, but also some other short lyrics in this play, are exquisitely tender and graceful, and may rank near the gems of the same description to be found in Shakspere and in Fletcher.

Love's Sacrifice (pr. 1633).

Love's Sacrifice (also printed in 1633, with the statement that it was received 'generally well') is a tragedy almost equally characteristic of its author[2]. Its theme is a tissue of passion and revenge, into which too many coarse threads are allowed to enter. The love of Bianca for Fernando, which after the jealousy of Bianca's husband has been aroused brings about the death of all the three, is represented as not passing into actual guilt; the balance between virtue and crime thus remains as it were in suspense, and sympathy seems all but allowable. Never has the intensity of passion been more forcibly portrayed than in this very character of Bianca, who tempts and restrains, yields and overcomes, in the same moment. At last, finding all betrayed, she bursts forth into wild declarations of her love, and recklessly defies her doom, at once boasting of her love and falsely accusing herself instead of her lover of

[1] Especially ii. 3; iii. 1; iv. 2, and v. 2 and 3.

[2] Crashaw's epigram on the two tragedies—

'Thou cheat'st us, Ford; mak'st one seem two by art:
What is Love's Sacrifice but the Broken Heart?'—

has of course a meaning consonant with the mystic theology of its author; but it is curious, though by no means surprising, to note the admiration of the one poet for the other.

the worst designs. Revolting as it is in one sense, it cannot be denied that there may be psychological truth in this harrowing picture; like others of Ford's female characters, Bianca resembles those conceptions of modern French literature in which temptation is represented as woman's doom. The dramatist has ventured to balance the question of her guilt or innocence upon a line unknown to moral law; but the hazard which he has chosen to run I cannot here endeavour to estimate. I therefore say no more of the main plot of this fascinating but dangerous play. Its bye-plot is utterly revolting, and in the character of d'Avolos, and the passages in which he excites the jealousy of the Duke against Fernando, Ford has most palpably copied *Othello*[1]. A considerable part of *Love's Sacrifice* is in prose.

The Fancies Chaste and Noble (pr. 1638).

For *The Fancies Chaste and Noble* (printed 1638) Ford in the Prologue again claims the merit of originality; but whether or not the plot be his own, it is difficult to imagine a worse-contrived one. At the risk of incurring suspicions of the worst kind, the Marquis of Siena has brought up his three nieces in absolute seclusion in his house; and at the close of the play reveals the excellence of his intentions towards the three Fancies by bestowing their hands in marriage. Combined with this (as it remains in the play) perfectly barren idea are two serious plots and an abundance of intolerable foolery. There are touches of feeling in the character of Flavia, and the virtuous bearing of Castamela in the hour of supposed danger refreshingly changes the atmosphere of this far from admirable comedy.

The Lady's Trial (1638).

Of *The Lady's Trial* (acted 1638) I can only say that the main plot of this in parts finely-written comedy seems to me altogether feebly conceived and loosely constructed. From a moral point of view, it exposes itself to no such objections as those which must be made against two other of Ford's plays. The suspicion cast on the fidelity of the heroine by the discovery of the importunities to which she

[1] When d'Avolos is led off to his deserved death, he bids farewell to his judges in words not unlike those of Marinelli at the close of Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*.

had been subjected during her husband's absence, is on his return removed without much difficulty—indeed it seems doubtful whether he ever allowed it to overcome his rooted belief in the virtues of his Spinella. Of the bye-plots, the one (that concerned with Benatzi) is clumsily contrived, and the other (about the lisping Amoretta and her lovers) is commonplace farce. Nothing redeems this play but the even excellence of most of the diction and versification. Of one of the most pleasing passages (Auria's speech, 'So resolute' &c., in v. 2) the main idea seems borrowed from *Othello*

Perkin Warbeck (pr. 1634).

The Chronicle Historie of Perkin Warbeck, as it is called on the title-page of the old quarto (printed 1634 with a dedication to the Earl of Newcastle), stands alone among Ford's works as an effort in the field of the historical drama. 'Studies of this nature' had, as the Prologue observes, been 'of late out of fashion' and 'unfollow'd;' and Ford's tragedy carries us back, not indeed to the old Chronicle Histories themselves, to whose crudities he could have no desire to return, but to the Histories of Shakspere. In the series of the latter *Perkin Warbeck* may almost be said to supply a missing link; nor is the task unworthily accomplished, for in the whole of our dramatic literature this play alone shares with Marlowe's *Edward II* and the anonymous *Edward III* a claim to be ranked at no great distance from Shakspere's national historic dramas.

The subject of this tragedy is a most attractive one, which could not fail at various times to attract the attention of dramatic authors[1]. In the Tudor period, it would

[1] Ford's play (which had been reprinted on the occasion of a similar agitation of the public mind in 1714) was acted in London in the memorable year 1745, in which two other plays on the subject were hastily written, and one of them (by Macklin) was unsuccessfully produced.—A different interest attaches to the sketch of a drama *Warbeck* found among Schiller's posthumous papers (see *Werke*, 12mo. ed., vol. vii). Subtly conceived in its plot and as a study of character, it treats history with absolute freedom, and only brings the story up to the commencement of Warbeck's expedition. Probably Schiller had abandoned the idea of carrying out this plan, in favour of the cognate subject of *Demetrius*.

have required very delicate treatment; for the character of King Henry VII is not susceptible of being rendered attractive, except in a work written by a politician for politicians. Such a book was Bacon's *Life of Henry VII*, which he offered as a tribute to the statecraft of the master who had allowed him to be sacrificed to parliamentary indignation. On Bacon's book Ford founded his play; but the dramatist is even more careful than the historian not to pass the bounds of suggestion in the shadows which he allows to fall over the character of the first Tudor King[1]. Yet the figure is skilfully drawn, and leaves an impression probably not far removed from historic truth. The impostor Warbeck is a dramatic conception of more striking ability. While no doubts are anywhere hinted as to the fact of his having been an impostor, he never betrays himself, and the key to the character is to be sought, not in King Henry's indignant remark that Perkin 'does but act,' but in his subsequent suggestion that

> 'The custom, sure, of being styl'd a King
> Hath fasten'd in his thought that he is such[2].'

Among the minor personages, the honest old Huntley, who is constrained by King James to give his daughter to the pretended Duke of York, is a character of admirably effective simplicity; and her lover, the faithful Dalyell (Dalzell), is likewise most pleasingly drawn. Even the adventurers who surround the impostor are spirited without being overdrawn sketches; and John-a-Water, the truism-loving mayor of Cork, is perhaps the only really humorous figure Ford ever brought upon the stage.

The whole play, while rapid and interesting in action, is thus true to the dignity of the species which it essays, and to which it is to be regretted Ford should not have returned after this solitary but successful effort.

In addition to the above independently-written plays, it remains to notice two works in which Ford's share, though

[1] See particularly the close of iii. 3 (and Gifford and Dyce's note); and the admirable passage in v. 2 (where the King receives the news of the manner of Warbeck's capture).

[2] v. 2.

undoubtedly great, is only to be distinguished by means of internal evidence.

Ford, Dekker, and W. Rowley's The Witch of Edmonton (by 1623).

The Witch of Edmonton (not printed till 1658, but generally held to have been acted as early as 1623 [1]) has been already [2] noticed as a play attributed by the publisher to William Rowley, Dekker, Ford, '&c.' The critics seem agreed to ascribe the body of the play to Ford and Dekker only, whose hands they profess themselves able to distinguish. I do not however know why William Rowley should be denied the credit of a substantial share in this play. In any case we shall not go far wrong in supposing Ford to have written at all events the earlier scenes concerned with the miseries of Frank, Winnifrede and Susan, and Dekker those of which the witch Mother Sawyer, her chief persecutor, Cuddy Banks the clown, and her familiar, the Dog, are the heroes.

Our stage possesses no more harrowing domestic tragedy than this play, in which Ford has found a subject congenial to him, but differing from those of most of his independently written dramas by its simplicity and the homely straightforwardness of the lesson it teaches. The intensity of some of the scenes is most remarkable, and the discovery of Frank's murder of his wife by her sister, when he lies sick in bed attended in disguise by the woman for whose sake he has committed the deed, is a situation of overpowering effectiveness. There is moreover a purity as well as a tenderness in the figures of the sisters, unparalleled in any of Ford's other plays. The old witch and her doings, and the buffoonery of the peasants who hunt her down, are doubtless in the main Dekker's handiwork; and though these parts of the play are not free from tediousness, it has been justly pointed out, as highly to the authors' credit, that the whole figure of the hunted hag, as well as the action itself, convey the salutary truth that persecution has made her what she is. So far then as the witch is

[1] There seems no evidence on the subject except that, according to a late notice mentioned by Gifford, 'Elizabeth Sawyer' was 'executed in 1621 for witchcraft.'

[2] Cf. *ante*, p. 48.

concerned, Dekker and his associates are not obnoxious to the charge to be brought against Middleton and Brome in connexion with their treatment of similar subjects.

Ford and Dekker's The Sun's Darling (1624).

The 'moral mask' charmingly named *The Sun's Darling* was published, as by Dekker and Ford, in 1656–7, but was acted already in 1624. This mask is held to have been founded on a play on the subject of *Phaeton* by Dekker, but the greater part of *The Sun's Darling* is stated to have been written by his coadjutor (certainly, as Gifford thinks, in the case of the last two acts). It became a great favourite; and though not altogether consistent in its allegory[1], is distinguished by much beautiful dialogue. The lyrics, in so far as they are original[2], seem to me less remarkable for their excellence.

Ford's characteristics as a dramatist.

In Ford it needs but little power of judgment to discern an author whose most striking features entitle him to an entirely distinct place among our dramatists. Some of his defects indeed he shares with others, but even here he may almost be said to defy comparison. Of comic power he is in general signally devoid, and the gross under-plots with which he disfigures most of his works, and the revolting brutality of the characters who figure in many of them, are unredeemed by any play of wit or humour. His low comedy is upon the whole the most contemptible of any in our pre-Restoration drama; and his high comedy, or what is intended for it, is deficient in grace and lightness[3]. Only in one of his dramas has he shown some power of comic characterisation; and from this as from other points of

His want of comic power.

Exceptional merits of his one historical drama.

[1] In act v the hero Raylight is suddenly for a time identified with the new King Charles; and his subjects are warned not to pretend 'to found rebellion upon conscience.'

[2] One (in ii. 1) is taken from Lyly. There is less justification for the plagiarism from Ben Jonson (Epilogue to *Every Man Out of his Humour*) in Winter's speech (v. 1); but Ford was perhaps not over-scrupulous in such matters.

[3] There is one passage in the *Fancies Chaste and Noble* (iii. 1) which certainly very epigrammatically characterises a favourite dramatic type, of which Massinger and Shirley were particularly fond:

'Modesty in pages
Shows not a virtue, boy, when it exceeds
Good manners.'

view it is to be regretted that he should never have returned to a species of composition so capable both of supplying suggestions and of imposing self-restraint as the historic drama. In *Perkin Warbeck* Ford furnishes the only example of a History not unworthy of comparison with the Shaksperean series, in which this play to some extent supplies a gap.

His versification.

But in the plays more peculiarly characteristic of this author, few readers will discover a wide range of excellences. As to mere outward form indeed Ford is surpassed by few if any of Shakspere's successors. His versification is distinguished by a fluency not devoid of strength; his verse is as sweet as Fletcher's, without having the same tendency to effeminacy of cadence; though Ford is fond of double-endings to his lines, his verse does not convey the impression of excess in this or in any other particular[1]. His lyrical gift is very great, though he does not husband its exercise with sufficient care.

His construction.

In the construction of his plays he is in general remarkably hasty and reckless; in his *Broken Heart* he has however shown himself capable of inventing and sustaining an action as perspicuous as it is complicated. *The Witch of Edmonton* too is excellently constructed in its main plot; but it is of course impossible to say whether the credit is in this instance to be given to Ford.

His strength to be sought in the intensity of particular situations and passages.

The strength of Ford lies in the intensity with which his imagination enables him to reproduce situations of the most harrowing kind, and to reveal by sudden touches the depths of passion, sorrow, and despair which may lie hidden in a human heart. That he at times creates these effects by conceptions unutterably shocking to our sense of the authority of fundamental moral laws, rather betrays an inherent weakness in his inventive power than adds to our admiration of it. The passion of Juliet is as intense, and the sympathy excited by her fate as irresistible, as the guilty love of Annabella and the spasm of pity which her

[1] Ford's plays contain a large admixture of prose, which however calls for no special remark.

end produces in us; and the horrible nature of the plot is therefore not of the essence of the emotions which the tragedy is intended to excite. The character of Bianca is a subtle psychological study,—subtle as the analysis of a possible disease. In passages of pure tenderness, such as those of Penthea's dying sufferings and Eteoclea's devoted affection, Ford has few equals; yet it is not so much in these scenes as in those where the ragings of passion alternate with sudden touches of thrilling sweetness that his power is most exceptional.

Contrasts of passion and sweetness.

Ford's tragedy fails to purify the emotions.

It is necessary in conclusion, before parting from this real though limited genius, to say one word, which must of course not be understood to apply to all his works. There is none of our dramatists who has so powerfully contributed to unsettle in the minds of the lovers of dramatic literature the true conception of the basis of tragedy. The emotions are not purified by creations

> 'Sweeten'd in their mixture
> But tragical in issue'—

so long as the mixture remains unharmonised, and the mind is perturbed by the spectacle of an unsolved conflict. A dramatist who falls short of this the highest end of tragedy cannot lay claim to its noblest laurels. The dramatic power of Ford is therefore as incomplete in its total effect as it is fitful in its individual operations; and

> 'It physics not the sickness of a mind
> Broken with griefs,'—

nor confirms that health of soul which seeks one of its truest sustenances in perfect art. It excites; it perturbs; it astonishes; it entrances; but it fails to purify, and by purifying to elevate and strengthen. Let those who may esteem these cavils pedantic, turn from Ford to the master-tragedians of all times, and they will acknowledge that Aristotle's well-worn definition still remains the truest test of the supreme adequacy of a tragic drama.

His choice of themes at times as unsound as

As to Ford's choice of themes, where it calls for condemnation, it at the same time condemns itself. 'It was,' says Hazlitt[1], 'not the least of Shakespear's praise, that

[1] *u. s.*, p. 179.

he never tampered with unfair subjects. His genius was above it; his taste kept aloof from it.' Ford was without a corresponding standard of the highest art; and in his nature, highly gifted as it was, there must have been something unsound. their treatment.

One other name remains worthy—in my opinion at least—of a place on the roll of the dramatists of genius with whom a great chapter in the history of our literature closes. The merits of Shirley have—partly perhaps in deference to the prejudiced satire of Dryden—been usually treated with more or less of contempt; but a perusal of his works is likely to modify the opinion which regards him mainly as the representative of decay. James Shirley (1596–1666).

JAMES SHIRLEY[1], born at London in 1596, was educated at Merchant-Taylors' School, St. John's College, Oxford, and Catharine Hall, Cambridge. He took his degrees in the latter University; but at an early period of his life abandoned the clerical profession which he had adopted and the living which he held, on becoming a convert to the Church of Rome. Traces are observable in his plays of a cordial attachment to the beliefs and institutions of a faith to which he through life continued to adhere[2]. For a time he supported himself as a 'hypodidascal' at the Grammar School of St. Alban's, but having probably already at this time produced a play[3], he soon settled in London, where, according to Wood, he 'lived in Gray's Inn, and set up for a play-maker.' His life.

In this capacity he appears to have secured the patronage of many friends of the theatre, among whom King

[1] *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley, with Notes by Wm. Gifford, and Additional Notes and some Account of Shirley and his Writings.* By the Rev. A. Dyce. (6 vols., 1833.) Mr. Dyce's criticisms seem to me remarkably powerful and just. This edition was welcomed by an article in the *Quarterly Review*, April 1833, worth disentombing.

[2] See the references to confession in *The Wedding* (i. 2 and ii. 3); to monastic vows and life in *The Grateful Servant* (v. 2; and cf. the glorification of the Benedictine Order, *ib.* iii. 3) and *The Gentleman of Venice* (iii. 1); and cf. *The Grateful Servant* (iv. 2) and *St. Patrick for Ireland* (*passim*).

[3] *Love Tricks*, in which the scene of 'The Complement-School' is full of school-phraseology.

Charles I and his consort were the most conspicuous. The former is stated[1] to have furnished Shirley with the plot of *The Gamester*, which His Majesty afterwards declared to be 'the best play he had seen for seven years.' The dramatist's grateful attachment to Queen Henrietta Maria may have added zeal to the bitterness of his retorts upon the assailant of the stage and, as was supposed, of its royal patroness—Prynne, the author of *Histriomastix*[2]. It was with the avowed intention of 'confuting' the diatribes of that censor of Interludes that a most splendid mask was offered to the King and Queen early in 1634 by the members of the four Inns of Court; and this entertainment, called *The Triumph of Peace*, the cost of which is stated to have been upwards of £21,000, was composed by the loyal Shirley. He appears to have enjoyed the favour of other patrons; and one of these—the great Lord Strafford—he in 1637 followed to Ireland, where he seems to have remained for about two years and where some of his plays were produced. But troublous days were to befall the cause to which Shirley was so devotedly attached; and the comfort in which he appears to have lived was to be exchanged for a hard struggle with necessity. The prologue of one of his plays[3] reveals by a sudden glance the desolation which had smitten the world for which he wrote when 'London had gone to York;' in September of the same year (1642) the theatres were closed, and Shirley was a dependant upon the munificence of the Earl (afterwards Duke) of Newcastle, into whose service he entered[4]. He afterwards returned to London, where he resumed his old profession as a teacher. To this he adhered during the remainder of his life, without even after the Restoration seeking to re-connect himself with the theatre. The drudgery of Latin and English grammars, and of translations in which, unhappily for his fame, he was

[1] By Sir Henry Herbert in his Office-book.

[2] See the Dedication of *The Bird in a Cage;* and cf. the lines prefixed by Shirley to Ford's *Love's Sacrifice.*

[3] *The Sisters.*

[4] He is said to have assisted this well-known nobleman in the composition of some of his plays.

associated with his old friend Ogilby, occupied his pen in these years; but he published many of his plays, as well as masks and poems, after he had retired from dramatic composition. In 1666 (according to Wood) the Great Fire of London drove him and his (second) wife from their habitation; and the terrors and misery of the event brought about the death of both 'within the compass of a natural day.' They were buried in the same grave in the churchyard of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, on October 29th, 1666.

His non-dramatic lyrics, &c.

Already in his University days Shirley had introduced himself to the world of letters by a poem, *Eccho, or The Unfortunate Lovers* (1618; reprinted 1646 under the title of *Narcissus*), an erotic idyll of no particular merit. His lyrics, published in separate collections, are light and mostly pleasing, and display a gift in this direction which the lyrics contained in his dramas usually fail to attest. His prologues and epilogues and commendatory verses—among them those prefixed to the 1647 folio of Beaumont and Fletcher—show him to have been on friendly terms with many of his fellow-dramatists. With Fletcher, as well as with Chapman, he was associated in the authorship of plays[1], and with Massinger he exchanged expressions of good-will[2]. Of Ben Jonson he speaks as 'our acknowledged master'—a tribute of feeling rather than of fact, so far as similarity of manner is concerned[3].

His relations with other dramatists.

His plays.

Shirley has left us a larger number of plays than any

[1] Cf. *ante*, pp. 225, 5, and 32.

[2] Cf. *ante*, p. 269, note 2.

[3] See the Dedication to *The Grateful Servant*. Mr. Dyce, while remarking on the difference of manner between Jonson and Shirley, points out Sir Solitary Plot in *The Example* as a direct imitation of the former by the latter. Gifford thinks that Puntarvolo in *Every Man Out of his Humour* furnished the hint for Jack Freshwater in *The Ball*; and notices plagiarisms from *The Alchemist* in *The Young Admiral* (iv. 1). *The Sad Shepherd* is quoted in *The Constant Maid* (v. 3).—Shirley's quotations from or reminiscences of Shakspere are not unfrequent. Falstaff is quoted in *The Example* (ii. 1) and in *The Sisters* (v. 2); and there seem other reminiscences of *Henry IV* in *The Lady of Pleasure* (ii. 2) and *The Gamester* (iv. 1), as well as of *Henry V* in *The Cardinal* (ii. 1); of *Hamlet* in *The Duke's Mistress* (v. 1) and *The Politician* (iv. 3); of *Twelfth Night* in *The Grateful Servant*; of *Cymbeline* in *St. Patrick for Ireland* (v. 2); and of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *The Triumph of Beauty*. Shylock's pound of flesh is referred to in *The Bird in a Cage* (ii. 1).

other dramatist except Shakspere. My notes must accordingly be brief; though hardly one of the thirty-three dramas here mentioned deserves to be passed by altogether.

Tragedies: The Maid's Revenge (1626).

Of Shirley's tragedies, *The Maid's Revenge* (licensed 1626) has been described by Mr. Dyce as the worst. Yet the subject,—a fatal jealousy of sister against sister,—is dramatically so excellent that even a less powerful treatment than that which Shirley has bestowed upon it could hardly have left it ineffective. The plot (taken from a story in Reynolds' *God's Revenge against Murder*) is perspicuous; while the diction, though it can hardly be described as powerful, exhibits, especially in the striking last act, touches of genuine pathos. Castabella in her disguise would not have been unworthy of Beaumont and Fletcher; while Diego the pert page is a specimen of a character which Shirley could draw with a vivacity equal to that of Massinger in this particular type. The comic interlude of Dr. Sharkino and his wonderful cures is naturally introduced.

The Traitor (1631).

In *The Traitor* (licensed 1631), on the other hand, it is easy to recognise Shirley's best work of this species, and indeed one of the finest of the romantic tragedies of this period. The plot is based on history; but the author has treated both the character and the fate of the principal personage of his drama with considerable freedom. The real Lorenzino de' Medici seems to have been singularly heedless in his talk, if cautious in his designs; and instead of (as in the play) falling an immediate victim to his own evil ambition, he had survived his assassination of Duke Alessandro for eleven years, when vengeance (real or pretended) at last overtook him[1]. From a dramatic point of view, which of course is the only one in question, it would be difficult to overrate the effectiveness of Shirley's tragedy. The supple windings of the arch-traitor Lorenzo, who, for the furtherance of his schemes, cunningly avails himself of the vices of his kinsman the Duke and of the virtues of the noble

[1] See Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, chap. x.

Sciarrha, and with serpentine pliability evades the most imminent danger of discovery[1], are represented with consummate skill; and the tragic horrors of the catastrophe are accumulated with overwhelming intensity[2].

The authorship of this tragedy, which was more than once revived after the Restoration, was at one time claimed by or for a Jesuit of the name of Rivers; in our own century it furnished the basis of a dramatic effort by a man of genius[3].

Love's Cruelty (1631).

To the same year belongs another tragedy—less ambitious in design, but hardly less powerful in character. The plot of *Love's Cruelty* (licensed 1631) will not admit of description[4]; but the purpose of the play must be allowed to be genuinely moral, and its spirit (notwithstanding some hazardously realistic scenes) thoroughly healthy. It would be difficult to point to many works of fiction which more forcibly bring home the truth of the terrible facility with which moral weakness, even in a noble nature, may be hurried into crime. The cruel passion of Clariana, to which Hippolito falls a victim, is depicted with an intensity approaching that of Ford.

[1] See particularly the admirably contrived passage (iii. 3), 'Whom talk'd he to' &c.

[2] The terrible device of confronting the lustful Duke with the corpse of the object of his cruel passion resembles part of the plot of *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (cf. *ante*, p. 178, note 1); but it forms a legitimate climax in Shirley's play. An admirable touch in the scene where the mask fails of its effect upon the infatuated Duke (iii. 2: 'Oh, the lethargy of princes') recalls the closing words of Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, a tragedy upon the whole approaching nearer than any other classical German play to the intensity of our old tragic drama.—After a favourite fashion of Shirley's, a comic episode is contrived by means of the timorous Depazzi, who makes his page Rogero rehearse with him a mock trial for treason (iii. 1).

[3] Richard Lalor Shiel's *Evadne, or The Statue* owes to Shirley's tragedy the suggestion of the relations between its principal personages and the character of the traitorous favourite Ludovico. But Shiel's play, which was first performed in 1819 with a most powerful cast, is a reconstruction rather than an adaptation of Shirley's; in the concluding situation a far milder theatrical effect is substituted for the appalling horrors of the last act of *The Traitor*; and the diction, which is very fluent and elegant, seems Shiel's own, though he occasionally borrows a flower from Shakspere.

[4] Part of it is taken from one of the novels of the Queen of Navarre, or from Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*.

The Duke's Mistress (1636).

Of Shirley's remaining tragedies *The Duke's Mistress* (acted 1636) may be passed by as relatively deficient in interest. It is however, both in conception and in execution, far purer than the title might seem to imply; nor is there anything offensive about this piece except the bye-plot concerned with the ill-favoured Fiametta and the 'gorgon' Scolopendra.

The Politician (probably by 1639).

The Politician (acted probably not later than 1639) is an effort of a very ambitious kind; some of its characters are cast in a tragic mould which they can hardly be said to fill. Among these are Gotharus the villainous 'politician' himself, his paramour Queen Marpisa who in the end poisons him for having (by mistake) caused the death of their son, Haraldus the unhappy but blameless offspring of sin, and Albina the virtuous and devoted wife of the guilty Gotharus. The interest of the action is well sustained; but the characters are hardly designed with adequate depth. The figure of Haraldus perhaps possesses a more genuine pathos than that of Albina; and the scene of his death, following upon an interview with his mother (which vaguely recalls that between Hamlet and Gertrude), is the most striking part of the play[1].

The Cardinal (1641).

The Cardinal (licensed 1641) seems to have been highly esteemed among his works by the author himself, and brought him high commendations both before and after the Restoration. The catastrophe of this tragedy is elaborated with a considerable expenditure of effort; and it may well be that, as has been suggested by Mr. Dyce, Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* exercised an influence upon its composition. A want of artistic power may however be observed in the treatment of the character of the Cardinal, who towards the end of the play only becomes its principal personage; and the diction, as Mr. Dyce points out, has far less perspicuity than is usual with Shirley, so that the

[1] The device by which Haraldus' death is brought about is undignified. He is made drunk by two courtiers whom his father Gotharus has sent to cure him of his melancholy, and dies from the fever thus contracted. I am certain that Shirley remembered *Hamlet* in writing this play; it is possible that he also remembered Cassio in *Othello*.

reader frequently finds himself in the situation of the Duchess when she tells the Cardinal (iv. 2),

> 'Your phrase has too much landscape, and I cannot
> Distinguish, at this distance you present,
> The figure perfect[1].'

General character of Shirley's other plays.

Of the rest of Shirley's plays the great majority may be described as romantic comedies, in which the element of incident predominates. Their scene is usually laid in the favourite regions of the romantic drama, the lands of the South; and there is every reason to believe that the

[1] The scene of this play is laid at the Court of Navarre. The Prologue seems to indicate that no allusion is intended to another Court, where a Cardinal was at that time (1641) all-powerful. (The allusion in ii. 2 to the dangers which overbearing prelates might incur in England is extremely curious, especially from an old college pupil of Archbishop Laud.) The Cardinal has induced the King to sanction the marriage of a beautiful young widow, the Duchess Rosaura, to the Cardinal's nephew, the proud and fiery Columbo. Rosaura's heart however belongs to the Count d'Alvarez; and Columbo having been sent off in command of an expedition of war, she entreats him by letter to release her from her engagement. He feigns assent, though in truth stung to fury by her breach of promise; and on returning victorious from the wars kills his innocent rival and casts his corpse before Rosaura's feet. Under the influence of the Cardinal, the King forgives Columbo this bloody deed, and Rosaura resolves on private vengeance, for which a captain called Hernando, who is smarting under an insult offered him by Columbo, presents himself as a willing agent.

In the fifth act the plot, and with it the character of the Cardinal, takes a new turn. Hitherto he has played *no* primary part in the action, and his character has been that of a crafty but not wholly selfish schemer. But Columbo having been killed by Hernando, the Cardinal resolves on a double crime—vengeance for his nephew's death is to follow the dishonour of the Duchess whom he suspects to be its authoress. Rosaura had feigned madness in order to conceal her own intentions of revenge; but the Cardinal pursues his hideous design, which is only frustrated by Hernando's sword. The King appears on the scene; and the Cardinal, believing himself on the point of death from his wounds, pretends to have poisoned the Duchess, and feigning repentance offers an antidote of which he drinks part. But the antidote proves to be really poison; and as his wounds were not really mortal he has thus killed himself as well as his victim.

Thus in this extraordinary fifth act the character of the Cardinal changes from politic ambition to villainy of the deepest dye. It is this change which seems to me to remain dramatically unaccounted for, and therefore inartistic. The character of the terrible Columbo is drawn with some power; but the contrast of gentle modesty in his rival d'Alvarez is rather too strongly marked; the unhappy young man is almost insipid. The strength of the play lies in the situations, especially those of the fifth act; but even from this point of view it can hardly be ranked as high as *The Traitor*.

Plays of an exceptional kind.

instances are very few in which the author had derived the materials of his plot from any previous narrative or dramatic work. These characteristics are not however common to all of Shirley's remaining dramas, and before noticing the comedies falling under the most numerous division of his plays, I may direct attention to two or three possessing more or less distinctive features of their own.

St. Patrick for Ireland (before 1640).

Among these the precedence belongs, by virtue of the dignity of its subject at all events, to *St. Patrick for Ireland.* This curious drama (printed in 1640) was produced, as will readily be guessed, in Dublin, doubtless during Shirley's residence there, and does not appear to have been licensed in England, where there was probably no sympathy to spare for Ireland's national saint[1]. It is to be hoped that Shirley's effort to obtain patrons for this 'patron' play[2] met with success;—at all events the mixture of religious sentiment and high spirits which it exhibits corresponds to the usages whereby, if report speaks true, St. Patrick is to this day annually honoured on his sacred mountain in Connemara. The Saint himself and his miracles—culminating it need hardly be said with the inevitable expulsion of snakes from Ireland—can however hardly be said to constitute the principal interest of this drama, which rather lies in the strange doings of the pagans at King Leogarius' Court, especially of the chief priest Archimagus and his servant Rodomant (the clown of the piece), and of Prince Corybreus[3].

[1] The London stage had recently been familiarised with the person of the Patron Saint of England in Kirke's play called *The Seven Champions of Christendom* (printed 1638), in which St. George took the leading part. This production is described by Geneste (x. 108), who considers it 'far from a bad play.'—Calderon's *Purgatorio de San Patricio* (Ticknor, ii. 367) was founded on a popular book of devotion on the life of the Saint which may, together with Calderon's drama itself, have been known to Shirley; but the resemblances do not appear to be very close. For a translation of the Spanish play, and an account of the source from which its materials were drawn, see Mr. D. F. McCarthy's *Dramas of Calderon*, vol. ii.

[2] 'Give us your free votes, and let us style
You patrons of the play, Him of the isle.' *Epilogue.*

[3] Corybreus visits the virtuous Emeria in the disguise of a god—an episode borrowed from Josephus or Bandello, which also recurs in Fletcher's *Mad Lover* (cf. *ante*, p. 201).

Although this play is evidently from the hand of a devout Catholic[1], and although the figure of the Saint is treated with genuine reverence, the whole cannot be said to display any real enthusiasm or even elevation of tone. Shirley's crude attempt to combine the spirit of a miracle-play with the attractions of a drama of intrigue must be classed among the oddities of dramatic literature. A Second Part (of which a promise is held out in the Prologue) seems never to have been written; and thus the play leaves the conversion of Ireland in a quite initiatory state.

Honoria and Mammon (pr. 1659).

While in *St. Patrick for Ireland* we have an element of the old miracle-play, Shirley's last dramatic work (if his own statement in the Dedication is to be accepted literally), *Honoria and Mammon* (published in 1659), announces itself as a 'Moral, dressed in dramatic ornament.' There is no proof that this production was ever intended for the stage, for which Shirley had probably long ceased to write. The work is a developement of an earlier piece, called *A Contention for Honour and Riches*, an entertainment in the style of the old moralities (printed in 1633). In the later production typical characters are substituted for the partially abstract figures of the earlier; but there is nothing in either to call for remark, although *Honoria and Mammon* is worth reading for some of the passages of satirical description contained in it[2]. Shirley has left some other entertainments of various kinds, which may be noticed below the text[3].

A Contention for Honour and Riches (pr. 1633).

[1] St. Patrick is (like the heroine of Massinger's *Virgin Martyr*) watched over by an angelic guardian, named Victor. See also the passage (v. 2) in which St. Patrick consoles Emeria by foretelling that she will become the foundress of a religious order,—an expedient which (like that in Massinger's *Maid of Honour*, *cf. ante*, p. 276) would hardly have been adopted by a Protestant writer.

[2] See especially the sketch of the habits of life of a young citizen (v. 1).

[3] *The Triumph of Peace*, the famous mask presented at Whitehall in 1633, is remarkable for its unusually large number of characters. Some of these are rather humorously conceived; see especially the second anti-mask, introducing 'effects of peace' which may, as Opinion says, be more appropriately called 'corruption.' Among them are 'projectors' of various kinds—prototypes of the 'Gründer' known in Germany among the effects of the Peace of 1870. *The Triumph of Beauty* (printed 1646, as performed 'at a private

The Arcadia (before 1640).

The 'Pastoral,' as it calls itself, of *The Arcadia* (printed 1640, having been acted some time previously) forms a signal exception to the originality characteristic of Shirley's plays. It is nothing but a dramatic version of the main plot, if it may so be called, of Sidney's famous romance. The action is drawn together with a certain degree of skill out of the loose network of that prolix work; but the story as thus condensed can hardly be said to wear any highly poetic aspect. As dramatised by Shirley, the adventures of Musidorus and Pamela are barely redeemed from dulness by the comic element of Mopsa's delusion; while an impression the reverse of pleasing is left by the story of Pyrocles, who, disguised as an amazon, is beset by the admiration of both the parents of the object of his own affections. The Elisabethan Arcadia is itself sufficiently far removed from the sweet simplicity of nature;—the Caroline Arcadia in its theatrical dress is even less attractive, though the version cannot be described as disloyal to its original.

Comedies:

The rest of Shirley's comedies are in reality so closely akin to one another, that it would serve no purpose to seek to distinguish between them according to the merely external test of the locality in which their scene is laid. In a few instances it is England, in most Italy—but there is no attempt on the part of the author to mark any distinction between the manners of these countries; and it is needless to say in which of them Shirley found his models.

Recreation') treats the familiar myth which Peele had long ago made the subject of a play at Court in his *Arraignment of Paris* (cf. vol. i. p. 205), and introduces a company of shepherds headed by 'Bottle,' a very palpable imitation of Bottom the Weaver. The mask of *Cupid and Death* (performed in 1653 before the Portuguese ambassador) reproduces the story of Cupid and Death exchanging their weapons; and *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses* (printed in 1659, as privately acted) treats with considerable fluency of rhetoric a well-known Ovidian episode, closing with the beautiful lyric *The glories of our birth and state*, thought to have been suggested by the fall, if not by the death, of Charles I, and said to have terrified the mind of Oliver Cromwell when recited to him. (See *Quarterly Review*, *u.s.*, p. 11. Gifford quotes a note of Oldys, according to which 'old Bowman used to sing' this song to King Charles himself.)

Love Tricks (1675).

Thus, though the only indication of the scene of the earliest of Shirley's plays, *Love Tricks, or The School of Complement* (licensed 1625), is an allusion to 'this our Fairy-isle,' the island in question is, as Gifford has pointed out, no other than England itself. The lover may be named Infortunio and a justice's clerk Ingeniolo, and yet retain their nationality almost as palpably as the Welshman Jenkin. This comedy, probably written while Shirley was still on the eve of adopting the profession of a playwright, has something of the freshness as well as of the lengthiness characteristic of juvenile works. The plot is rather carelessly constructed[1], and the pastoral scenes are purely conventional; but there is some humour (though not of a very striking or novel kind) in the scene of the 'Complement-School,' where the arts of politeness and eloquence are to be had ready-made on payment of a fee[2].

The Brothers (1626).

The thème of *The Brothers* (licensed 1626, and revived after the Restoration) is one which the sentimental and the comic drama of more modern times have re-iterated with wearisome persistency; but few tyrannical parents, in either real or theatrical life, can have surpassed the father of Felisarda, whom he bids prefer suitor after suitor according to their degrees of wealth. But there is an approach to genuine pathos in the fidelity of the much-tried heroine and her lover Fernando; and a diverting element is supplied, at least in the earlier scenes, by the frank immorality of Luys.

The Witty Fair One (1828).

The Witty Fair One (licensed 1628) is unpleasing in plot, but contains a considerable variety of characters. Among these the foolish knight Sir Nicholas Treedle is the most amusing—especially in the scene where he submits to an examination and lecture by his tutor (ii. 1). The notion of the 'wild young gentleman' Master Fowler

[1] There seems equally little reason why the heroine Selina should take a fancy to the old merchant Rufaldo, and why she should suddenly abandon him.

[2] Books of Polite Instruction were, as Gifford observes, very numerous in this age.

being converted from the errors of his ways by means of a conspiracy to treat him as dead is perhaps better in the conception than in the execution; but one of the epitaphs which he discovers to have been written on him should not be overlooked by collectors of that species of literature [1].

The Wedding (pr. 1629).

The Wedding (printed 1629) I am inclined to regard as a play of high merit. The plot is both interesting in itself and of great dramatic strength. It would be difficult to find a better constructed serious action; and the under-plot which relieves it is very lively [2].

The Grateful Servant (1629).

The Grateful Servant (licensed in 1629 under the title of *The Faithful Servant*, and printed in 1630 under the name it afterwards retained) is, so far as its main plot is concerned, an extremely pleasing work. The theme of the action is a noble one—the unselfishness of true love [3]; and

[1] 'How he died, some do suppose;
How he lived, the parish knows;
Whether he's gone to heaven or h—,
Ask not me, I cannot tell.'

[2] The action opens with the preparations for a wedding, which are interrupted in consequence of a dark suggestion as to the unfaithfulness of the bride having been whispered to the bridegroom by his friend. A duel ensues, and in the moment of what seems to be his death the friend repeats his asseveration of the lady's guilt, of which he declares himself to have been the partner. But he recovers from his wound; and it finally proves that not the innocent Gratiana, but Lucibel (who appears in the play disguised as the page Millicent) had been his victim. The misery of the falsely-accused bride, of the repentant sinner, of the desperate bridegroom who believes himself to have slain his friend, and of the injured but devoted Lucibel, is at once terminated by a happy and natural *dénouement*.—The chief figures of the under-plot are Rawbone, a thin and thrifty citizen whom the doctor has told 'there's no way but one with him'—(*i.e.* he must die),—and 'that's not the way of all flesh,' says his interlocutor, and his fat rival Lodam, whose delectable duel is the most amusing scene of the play.

[3] Foscari, the lover of Cleona, declares himself ready to renounce his aspirations to her hand when he finds that the Duke is a suitor for it. He gives himself out as dead, having resolved to take the vows of a Benedictine monk, when a happier turn is given to his fortunes. Leonora, the Duke's old love, who has assumed the disguise of a page in order to escape from another marriage, and has entered the service of Foscari, reveals her identity to him. The relations between Foscari, Cleona, the Duke and Leonora-Dulcino, recall *Twelfth Night*, though with a difference; nor can the resemblance be regarded as fortuitous, especially as one or two features of Malvolio are reproduced in Cleona's 'foolish ambitious' steward Jacomo (otherwise a quite distinct

the play is undoubtedly characterised by elevation of sentiment, as well as by excellence of construction and diction. It was worthy of being dedicated to Jonson (of whose manner it however exhibits no traces) and of the commendations which were bestowed on it by not less than eleven fellow-poets.

Love in a Maze (1631).

Love in a Maze (licensed 1631) may be passed by as a comedy of inferior merit, hardly successful in its treatment of an idea which might have been made the basis of an excellent play[1].

The Bird in a Cage (pr. 1633).

In *The Bird in a Cage* (printed 1633) we seem fairly to lose the ground of reality from under our feet. This comedy in plot resembles one of those farcical extravaganzas familiar to more than one later generation. The bright fancy of Mr. Planché, with the help of materials derived from the Princess Schehezarade, might have woven this dramatic tale: how a King, in order to preserve his daughter from the awful danger of importunate suitors, shut her up in a castle; how a lover in disguise staked his life in a wager with the King upon obtaining access to the Princess in spite of walls and guards; and how he succeeded in his venture by causing himself to be introduced into her presence in a cage among a number of birds sent by her father for her diversion. Other characters—above all an artful personage who, wearing the habit of a mountebank, pretends to possess the power of rendering men invisible and who suggests the device of the cage to the despairing lover—contribute to enliven the action. It moreover includes a very amusing scene where the Princess and her ladies, in order to beguile their tedium,

character).—The bye-plot of *The Grateful Servant* appears to be wholly original; but though its intention may be good, the less said about it the better.

[1] The situation of a man distracted by an equal passion for two sisters, both of whom are alike enamoured of him, is certainly an excellent starting-point for either a comic or a tragic complication, whether or not such a difficulty be in accordance with actual human experience. But Shirley has made little of it, and the comedy is uninteresting. The self-denying affection of Yongrave for Eugenia (iv. 1) repeats a motive already used by Shirley in *The Grateful Servant*.—The felicitous title of *Love in a Maze* has been borrowed by a living dramatist (Mr. Dion Boucicault) for a comedy of real literary merit.

enact an extempore play introducing another heroine enclosed of old in a brazen tower[1].

Hyde Park (1632).

By way of contrast, the next two comedies in the list of Shirley's plays bring us into close contact with the realities of contemporary life and manners. It is as descriptive of these that the comedy of *Hyde Park* (licensed 1632) is chiefly interesting. Neither the supposed widow Bonavent, nor the capricious Mistress Carol, whose lover secures her affections by deluding her into a vow *not* to seek his, is a very attractive personage; on the other hand, the scenes in the Park, with the races horse[2] and foot, with the gentlemen making their bets, and even the ladies venturing 'a pair of gloves,' offer a gay and bustling picture of the life of the day.

Shirley (and Chapman)'s The Ball (1632).

The Ball (also licensed in 1632) is likewise chiefly noteworthy as a comedy of manners. On the title-page of the printed copy this play is described as the joint composition of Shirley and Chapman; but I follow Dyce (in opposition to Gifford) in treating it as almost entirely Shirley's composition. It would appear from a memorandum in Sir Henry Herbert's Office-book that in *The Ball* 'there were divers personated so naturally both of lords and others of the court' that the Master of the Revels would have for-

[1] Reference has already been made to the Dedication of this play. It is conceived in a spirit of almost savage irony. The patron whom Shirley pretends to claim for his comedy is Prynne, the author of *Histriomastix*, who was at this time in a 'happy retirement,' *i.e.* in prison, on which the dramatist professes to have had 'an early desire to congratulate him.' 'No poem could tempt me with so fair a circumstance as this in the title.' The censor's attention is particularly invited to the play personated by ladies introduced into the action (female actors had, as Gifford points out, been strongly reprobated in *Histriomastix*); and an allusion to love-locks (i. 1) is also, Gifford thinks, meant for the address of the author of *The Unloveliness of Love-locks*. It may be added, that the passage in which Bonamico describes the inhabitants of the cage to the Duke (iv. 1) is full of political allusions wittily introduced into the description of the birds.

[2] According to Pepys, horses were brought on the stage in this piece (on its revival after the Restoration in 1668), the earliest record, according to Mr. Dyce, of 'a species of absurdity with which modern audiences are highly gratified.' The song in honour of the famous race-horses of the day (iv. 3) almost entitles *Hyde Park* to rank as the ancestor of a species which may yet be destined to thrive on the British stage—the 'sporting drama.'—The horse-races in *Hyde Park* are referred to in Glapthorne's *Wit in a Constable* (ii. 1).

bidden the play, had he not been promised the omission of 'many things which he found faulte withall.' The satire remaining in the printed play is upon the whole not very biting or severe, except in the case of the pretended traveller Jack Freshwater, who was however more probably taken from a dramatic than from an actual original[1]. The main purpose of this comedy seems to have been to contradict the scandalous reports which had arisen in connexion with the first attempts at establishing Subscription Balls[2]. How far these early efforts in support of what has become one of the most respectable of British institutions had virtue on their side, I cannot pretend to determine. Shirley's play, when flavoured by personalities of dress and manner, must doubtless have stimulated curiosity while it reproved scandalous tongues; but whatever charm it possessed has evaporated, and it cannot be described as a particularly attractive comedy.

Shirley's The Young Admiral (1633).

In *The Young Admiral* (licensed 1633) we have another of those romantic comedies which few of our dramatists can have produced with a facility surpassing Shirley's. The ingeniously constructed plot of this play skilfully prepares the double moral conflict which it exhibits in the person of the hero. Both the tyrannous prince Cesario and his weak father the King are well-drawn characters; and the daring of Rosinda, who by giving herself into the hands of the enemy makes herself a hostage for the safety of Cesario, is a novel incident of great effectiveness. The comic episode of the trick played upon the foolish Pazzarello by the sportive page Didimo, who causes him to

[1] *viz.*, as Gifford suggests, Jonson's Puntarvolo (in *Every Man out of his Humour*). The reader should not fail to acquaint himself with the astounding account which Jack Freshwater gives (v. 1) of his grand tour from Gravesend (where it finally appears that he 'stay'd all this summer, expecting a wind'). Coryat (cf. *ante*, p. 220, note 3) is referred to in ii. 1, and, according to Gifford, slily alluded to elsewhere.

[2] These meetings, in which a golden ball seems to have been the badge of the presiding lady, are described by one of the characters as an imported device of a doubtful nature; but the heroine Lucina (l) undertakes to prove their innocence to her lover. In the fifth act the Ball, which in fact consists of the presentation of a mask, is held, and the character of the amusement is vindicated.

submit to a magic process warranted to render him 'free from stick and shot,' also strikes me as original. The propriety of this comedy gave so much delight to the Master of the Revels, that he took special note of the circumstance in his Office-book, where he declares it 'may serve for a patterne to other poetts, not only for the bettring of maners and language, but for the improvement of the quality' (i. e. the actors) 'which hath received some brushings of late.'

The Gamester (1633).

Commendation from a still higher quarter, if of a less specific character, was, as has been already seen, bestowed upon *The Gamester* (licensed 1633). The popularity which this play long continued to enjoy in the several versions which successively appeared of it[1], must however have had some other reason than the royal origin of its plot[2] and the royal praise of its execution. It is probably to be accounted for in the first instance by the ingenuity of the plot, of which the final surprise—converting an apparently objectionable complication into a harmless stratagem—is cleverly kept secret till quite the close of the play. Secondly, by the striking vivacity of the action, in which the gambling scenes, the follies of Barnacle the younger and their punishment, and the pathetic loves of Beaumont and Violante[3], diversely relieve the progress of the main plot. Thirdly, by the vigour of the composition; for Shirley, doubtless from a determination to do honour to a royal command, was certainly on his mettle when writing this play.

It must however be remarked—and the circumstance of this play having been treated by an eloquent and popular essayist[4] as a typical work makes the observation doubly necessary—that few if any of Shirley's other dramas are so obnoxious as *The Gamester* to the charge of lasciviousness

[1] Among these were Charles Johnson's *The Wife's Relief, or The Husband's Cure* (1711), *The Gamesters*, by Garrick (1757 and 1772), and *The Wife's Stratagem*, by Poole (1827). Mrs. Centlivre's *The Gamester* (noticed below) and Moore's play of the same title (1753) have no connexion with Shirley's play.

[2] Part of the plot King Charles, or Shirley, found in a novel of Celio Malespini, or in one of those of the Queen of Navarre.

[3] See particularly iv. 2.

[4] Mr. Charles Kingsley in his *Plays and Puritans* (republished 1873).

of description and general grossness of tone. True, what is from this point of view so specially offensive in the latter part of the play is mere pretence; but few spectators or readers are likely to possess sufficient theatrical prescience to foresee the ultimate harmless issue of the plot. As a comedy of manners the play deserves high praise, and the scenes in the Ordinary are full of life[1]. But notwithstanding the merits of this production, it would in my opinion be very unfair to the dramatic genius of Shirley to judge it by this solitary test. The character of Wilding is so ineffably contemptible that nothing can retrieve it; Hazard is only tolerable by comparison; and though it would be hard not to credit this drama with a moral purpose, its excellences are not such as to redeem the grossness which pervades the treatment, and indeed characterises the idea, of the main plot.

The Example (1634).

The Example (licensed 1634) is a comedy strikingly original in its plot, and distinguished at the same time by the very direct and effective manner in which it enforces the moral of its story. The power of woman's virtue here receives a noble tribute at the hands of a dramatist whose elevation of sentiment is, generally speaking, one of his most honourable characteristics[2].

[1] In iii. 3 the three gamblers Sellaway, Acreless, and Littlestock successively introduce a Lord, a Knight, and a Country-gentleman; and the descriptive dialogue has some historical interest. Young Barnacle follows, reading astounding news in the New Coranto. 'Ancient Petarre,' as in allusion to Ancient Pistol the impudent page is called, is an amusing picture of the fashionable *gamin*.

[2] The chief personages of the action are Sir Walter Peregrine, who, being involved in debt, quits his country for a time in order to seek his fortunes in the Low Country wars; his wife; and a wild gallant Lord Fitzavarice (who by the bye is very inappropriately named; Shirley's names are usually happy, and in this play especially so, with the above exception). The current of Lord Fitzavarice's guilty passion for Lady Peregrine is broken by her fainting away, when in a pretended access of rage he has drawn his dagger upon her, and is changed into repentance when, on recovering from her swoon, she tells the trembling man how she has had

> 'a short but pleasing vision.
> Methought, from a steep precipice as you were falling
> Into the sea, an arm chain'd to a cloud
> Caught hold, and drew you up to heaven'—

an image which is a kind of converse of a most striking one in Webster's

The Opportunity (1634).

The Opportunity (licensed 1634) is a comedy of 'errors;' for its whole action turns on the results of its hero (Aurelio) being mistaken for another person (Borgia). The plot therefore, as in all comedies of this description, labours under the disadvantage of resembling a pyramid standing on its apex; and in this instance the author has saved himself the trouble of accounting in any way for the marvellous 'consimility' which deceives a whole Court (including the real Borgia's father). But this being taken for granted, the ingenuity with which, after the cup of good fortune has been raised to the hero's lips, it is dashed from them at the last moment by his not taking advantage of his *opportunity*, is admirable; and the play is of its kind most entertaining, although not free either from licentiousness, or in one of its main situations from what is even worse[1].

Vittoria Corombona (cf. *ante*, p. 255). His thoughts are now entirely directed to proving his penitence and his reverence for her who has awakened conscience in him; and together with a rich necklace he sends her as a gift a mortgage into which her husband had entered with him.

At this point—and this is admirably contrived—the husband returns on a sudden visit to his wife, and rashly construes the gifts of gratitude into a proof of guilt. A duel is to be fought between Peregrine and Fitzavarice, when a foolish gentleman who is anxious to escape from the office of second procures the serving of a writ upon Peiegrine for another debt owing to Fitzavarice, and it is not till the latter has himself caused Peregrine's release that the truth begins to dawn upon the husband's mind. The duel is however fought, Lord Fitzavarice, who has revealed the story of his own wickedness and its overthrow, seeking death; but both the combatants are wounded, and honour being thus satisfied, all ends happily. Fitzavarice marries Lady Peregrine's sister Jacinta, whose treatment of a brace of foolish lovers has furnished the comic under-plot of the play.

It may be objected to the conduct of the plot that Sir Walter Peregrine might have rendered the latter part of the action unnecessary by hearing his wife out. For the rest, while the direct and emphatic tribute to virtue which the play offers merits recognition, it must be allowed that the repentant and generous Lord Fitzavarice seems to be treated by the author as an exception to the rule of society even more wonderful than the virtuous wife.

The comic characters in this play are not very striking. In the pretended wit, Confident Rapture, the high-flown phraseology of the fashionable lounger of the day is caricatured; and Mr. Dyce thinks Sir Solitary Plot a 'happy imitation' of Ben Jonson's characters of humour. I should leave out the epithet.

[1] The comic under-plot of the servant Pimponio, whom his masters, with the aid of an impudent page (little Ascanio, dressed for the purpose in the habit of a Switzer—'one of the lowest High Germans,' says Pimponio, 'that ever I look'd upon'), gull into fancying himself a prince, forms one of the 'drolls' in

Shirley's (and Fletcher's?) The Coronation (1635).

The Coronation, licensed 1635 as by Shirley, and claimed by him as his own in a list of his plays published by him in 1652, was on the title-page of its first edition, printed 1640, attributed to Fletcher, and is included in the earlier editions of Beaumont and Fletcher's works. Fletcher died in 1625; but the known connexion between him and Shirley allows us to suppose it possible that, though the latter declared the play to have been 'falsely ascribed' to Fletcher, that poet's hand may have contributed an occasional touch. It would under the circumstances be unfair to deprive Shirley of the credit of any of the unusually numerous beauties of diction occurring in this play. Yet it is at the same time difficult to rid oneself of an impression that the peculiar sweetness of certain passages[1] may be due to a co-operation on the part of Fletcher, although his contributions may have been so slight in extent as to justify the spirit of Shirley's disclaimer.

The main intrigue of this play (in which there is nothing historical beyond the sound of some of the names) is that of the double discovery, at the time of a Queen's coronation,

a collection already frequently referred to (Kirkman's *The Wits*, 1673). The comedy itself was revived after the Restoration.

[1] See the speech of Arcadius, iii. 2:

'In my first state I had no enemies;
I was secure while I did grow beneath
This expectation. Humble valleys thrive with
Their bosoms full of flowers, when the hills melt
With lightning, and rough anger of the clouds;'

and the equally beautiful speech of Fortune in the Mask (iv. 3):

'*Fame.* This is the house of Love.
Fort. It cannot be,
This place has *too much* shade, and looks as if
It had been quite forgotten of the spring
And sun-beams. Love affects society
And heat; here all is cold as the airs of winter;
No harmony to catch the busy ear
Of passengers, no object of delight
To take the wand'ring eyes; no song, no groan
Of lovers, no complaint of willow garlands:
Love has a beacon on his palace-top
Of flaming hearts, to call the weary pilgrim
To rest, and dwell with him; I see no fire
To threaten, or to warm: can Love dwell here?'

The versification of these lines is quite Fletcherian.

that she has two brothers living who had been supposed dead. A love-plot is interwoven; and a very complicated action is the result.

The Lady of Pleasure (1635).

The Lady of Pleasure (licensed 1635) brings us back from 'Epire' to more familiar ground. The idea of this play (which is chiefly valuable as a comedy of manners) is the attempt of a husband to cure his wife's rage for fashionable amusements and fashionable extravagance by pretending to adopt the same course of life himself, as he finds exhortation (which at the beginning of the piece he administers something after the fashion of Sir Peter Teazle) of no avail. He accordingly undertakes

'to dance, and play, and spend as fast as she does,'

and to make her jealous into the bargain, by enrolling himself among the admirers of a young widow (Celestina), who manages her several lovers with considerable skill as well as self-control. The variety of characters in this comedy is very remarkable [1], and must have rendered it extremely entertaining on the stage. The writing is, in part at least, excellent, though some passages are very gross.

The Royal Master (by 1638).

The Royal Master, not licensed till 1638, was previously acted in Dublin, both in the new theatre there and at the Castle before the Lord Deputy [2]. The play—one of the best comedies of intrigue of the period to which it belongs—deserved this distinction. The entanglement is most ingeniously contrived, and the *dénouement* satisfactory and effective. The wiles of the King's favourite, Montalto, are truly subtle; and in the character of Domitilla—the girl of fifteen years who, in an innocent delusion, fixes her love upon the King, mistaking his promise to provide her with

[1] Among them is one of those representatives of the University man of the day who exemplify the very imperfect results upon manners and character which the dramatic teachers of the school of life attributed to that of the cloister; besides a series of frivolous coxcombs ending in an ambitious barber of the name of Haircut. The character of the anonymous Lord is puzzling—was any personal reference here intended?

[2] The Epilogue, a very pleasing and elegant lyric, is addressed to him, and pays a tribute to the wife to whom (as the evidence of so many affectionate letters proves) Strafford was devotedly attached.

a husband for a proof of personal affection — Shirley has created a poetic figure of idyllic simplicity and sweetness. The girlish gaiety with which she rejects the eager courtesies of the youthful Octavio [1], the sudden and mistaken fancy that a fate 'too good and great for her' may after all be her destiny, the pathos of her resignation [2], and the dignity of her answer when the King at once tests her purity and extinguishes her passion for him by feigning to make her a dishonourable offer, are alike passages of charming freshness and truthfulness. And it is a most happily-conceived close to this touching story, that the King succeeds in his endeavour—

> 'to repair this pretty piece of innocence
> Whom I have brought into a waking dream
> Of passion.'

Octavio manfully braves the danger of the King's wrath, and thus earns the right to win his love after all.

Judiciously edited, this play is well fitted to grace the stage, to which I hope it may be yet some day restored. The diction is occasionally of very great beauty [3].

The Gentleman of Venice (1639).

The Gentleman of Venice (licensed 1639) is a romantic comedy of considerable spirit, in parts written with much elegance. Of the two plots combined in it one is unendurable in its conception, but carried out with a degree of self-restraint worthy of acknowledgment. The other turns on the more familiar notion of a supposed prince proving to be a gardener's son—and *vice versâ*. Touches

[1] i. 2. She afterwards tells him (iii. 3)—and the maxim is irresistibly humorous in the mouth of a young lady of fifteen—

> 'Men must not love till they be one-and-twenty;
> They will be mad before they come to age else.'

[2] 'And if he should despise me, as 'tis justice,
Will heaven be angry, if I love him still?
Or will the king call it a treason in me?
If he do, I can willingly die for it,
And with my last words, pray he may live happy.
But why am I this trouble to your grace?
My story is not worth one of your minutes.' (v. 1.)

The story of Domitilla will remind many of a very tender little poem by George Eliot, *How Lisa loved the King*—maybe derived from the same original source.

[3] See Montalto's speeches, ii. 1 and part of iii. 1.

individualising the scene of the play, which is laid at Venice, are skilfully introduced.

The Doubtful Heir (by 1640).

The Doubtful Heir (originally produced at Dublin under the title of *Rosania, or Love's Victory*, and licensed in 1640 under that name [1]) is a romantic comedy brimful of strange events, especially in the last act, where the breath of the reader is taken away by a succession of two complete changes in the situation. The chief attraction of the piece however lies in the pathos and poetry of its love-passages[2], and in the general purity of tone characterising the conduct of the story. When this play was acted at the Globe the author, with a contempt for the body of his audience worthy of Ben Jonson, informed them in the prologue that he

> 'did not calculate this play
> For this meridian'—

but for the smaller and more refined audience of the Blackfriars. The humours of the Captain who presses his creditors into the military service and succeeds in educating them into fighting men, may have satisfied the needs of a popular pit.

The Constant Maid (by 1640).

Of *The Constant Maid* (printed 1640[3], and thought to have been acted during Shirley's absence in Ireland 1636–9) the scene is laid in London; but this play has little interest as an illustration of manners, while its main plot cannot be said to be well constructed. There is however some pathetic power in the scene where the daughter upbraids the mother whom she imagines to have stolen her love from her (iv. 2). The usurer Hornet promises well at the

[1] In the Prologue at Dublin Shirley refers to the circumstance that

> 'Such titles unto plays are now the mood,
> Aglaura, Claricilla,—names that may
> (Being ladies) grace, and bring guests to the play.'

Aglaura is the name of a tragi-comedy by Sir John Suckling (printed 1638); *Claricilla* that of one by Thomas Killigrew (printed 1641). Shirley seems himself to have been fertile, and usually happy, in the invention of 'romantic' female names.

[2] See especially ii. 3; iv. 1, and the charming speech of Ferdinand at the close of v. 2.

[3] Reprinted 1667 with the second title, *Love will find out the Way.*

opening [1]; but the extravagance of the trick played upon him to make him believe himself the object of royal favour overshoots the mark [2].

The Humorous Courtier (by 1640).

The Humorous Courtier (printed 1640, but probably acted some time previously), though disfigured by intolerable grossness, must be allowed to be a comedy singularly happy in the conception of its plot, which furnishes the opportunity for a varied developement of character on the basis of a single action. Unfortunately, the play has come down to us in an extraordinarily corrupt condition, and even Mr. Dyce's acumen has not invariably been able to restore a satisfactory text [3].

The Imposture (1640).

The Imposture (licensed 1640) labours under the disadvantage of a plot of personation too wildly improbable to beguile the reader into belief in the reality of the intrigue unfolded before him [4]. But the action is interesting,

[1] He says of himself:

> 'I always live obscurely, to avoid
> Taxations; I never pay the Church
> Her superstitious tithes.' (ii. 2.)

[2] The idea was perhaps borrowed from Fletcher's *The Noble Gentleman* (cf. *ante*, p. 213); but the delusion there is appropriate to its victim.

[3] With the assistance of her lover Foscari Duke of Parma (whom she has pretended to dismiss from her court, but who returns to it in disguise), the Duchess of Mantua, by giving out that she intends to marry one of her own courtiers, exposes them to a trial of their honesty and good-will before which they all succumb. The ambitious Contarini, whose recent marriage might seem to have put him out of the question, endeavours to induce his wife either to commit suicide or to qualify herself for a divorce. The pretended misogynist Orseolo (the 'humorous courtier' who gives the play its name) reveals himself as the opposite of the character which he has professed. Together with these, the conceited Volterre, whose accomplishments consist in

> 'a little foreign vanity,
> Shewn in' [very] 'corrupted mixture
> Of foreign tongues,'

is at last undeceived and forgiven; while the outrageously idiotic Depazzi, whose self-delusion endures to the last (after he has been offered the choice of 'four or five several deaths,' not one of which he can be 'got to accept'), is at last brought to saying 'I forgive your highness, I.' The idea of this comedy will accordingly be allowed to be an exceptionally felicitous one, though unfortunately there is too much 'hyperbolising' in its dialogue, according to Depazzi's conception of the meaning of the verb.

[4] The villain of the piece is Flaviano, the Duke of Mantua's favourite. In order to prevent a marriage between the brave Leonato the Duke of Ferrara's son and Fioretta the Duke of Mantua's daughter, for whom Flaviano himself

if incredible, and proceeds with so much spirit that it is explicable how the author should declare that this comedy may 'march in the first rank of his own compositions.'

The Sisters (1642).

The circumstances under which the comedy of *The Sisters* (licensed in April 1642) was brought out have some interest; for it was clearly one of the last productions of the pre-Restoration drama[1]. In itself however the play is poor—being a variation on the old theme of the proud and the humble sister, of whom the former in the end proves to be supposititious. She has previously been fooled by the impudence of the captain of a band of robbers, who pretends first to be a 'Chaldean' and then a prince. The play seems rather hastily put together.

The Court Secret (pr. 1653).

Finally, *The Court Secret* (not acted till after the Restoration; printed 1653[2]) surpasses all Shirley's other plays in the complexity of its plot, which turns on a double mistake as to the real identity of its youthful heroes Manuel and Carlo. The chivalrous courtesy of these noble rivals to one another is a motive gracefully elaborated; and there is some pathos in the prison-scene between Manuel

entertains a passion, he contrives that Juliana, an inmate of a nunnery whither she had retired after being ruined by Flaviano himself, shall pass herself off as the princess. (In the unaccountable conduct of the Duke in half falling in with this scheme lies the chief weakness of the plot.) In spite of the pretences of the false Fioretta, Leonato carries her off as his bride to his father's court. Here the imposture is in the end revealed by the arrival of the true Fioretta's brother Honorio and by that of Fioretta herself. All ends well except for Flaviano and Juliana, the latter of whom is sent into a house of penance. (The author seems to have felt that he is rather hard upon poor Juliana, for whom the reader too will conceive no very bitter dislike, and makes amends to her by means of an impudent little Epilogue, which 'Mrs. Ellen' might have spoken with great effect.)—The comic bye-plot concerned with the coward Bertoldi may be described as wearisome. It is worth noting that the play contains (i. 2) a song of rejoicing for peace, much superior to any other of the lyrics introduced by Shirley into his dramas.

[1] See the Prologue, which begins 'Does this look like a Term?' (*i.e.* as we should say like a 'season'). 'London is gone to York,' *i.e.* the King had already moved thither. The play itself begins as it were ominously with the words 'I like not this last Proclamation.'

[2] Dedicated to William Earl of Strafford, the son of the great statesman—in consideration of which circumstance it is strange that the author should not have removed the passage (iv. 3):

'Some expire humbly
I' the cradle, some dismiss'd upon a scaffold.'

and Clara; but the attention necessary to keep the threads of the action together is likely to interfere with the enjoyment of this play[1].

Shirley's characteristics as a dramatist.

The fertility of Shirley's genius as a dramatist is likely to impress itself as one of his main characteristics upon any one who has become acquainted with all his plays, or who has even taken the trouble to note the list of them given in the preceding pages. Chance has however much to do with the circumstance that a larger number of plays remains from his hand than from that of any other Elisabethan dramatist except Shakspere; in absolute fertility both were certainly surpassed by Thomas Heywood, and possibly by other writers. In any case, however, the thirty-three[2] plays noticed above (in addition to those in which Shirley co-operated with other authors, and to those productions not to be reckoned as dramas) constitute no meagre legacy to our dramatic literature.

The originality

It is however in a higher sense that this writer challenges our admiration as one of the most productive members of the group which he may be said to close. In the invention of his plots Shirley is in most cases all but incontestably original; and some of the most happily devised of his dramatic stories (such as those of *The Wedding*, *The Young Admiral*, *The Humorous Courtier*, *The Example*,— I do not know whether I have a right to add *The Royal Master*) appear to owe nothing to any invention but his own. As a rule he constructs as skilfully as he invents easily. He prefers in general to subordinate a less important (most frequently a comic) intrigue to the main plot of the piece, instead of adopting the always hazardous plan of allowing two plots to run on as it were parallel to one another during a considerable part of the action. His plays

and virtual unity of his plots.

[1] The tragedy of *Andromana, or The Merchant's Wife* (attributed to Shirley by Dr. Farmer, on the strength of the initials 'J. S.' with which it was published in 1660, and printed as Shirley's in *The Ancient British Drama*, vol. iii) is unhesitatingly excluded by Dyce from Shirley's works. It is most certainly, as Dyce says, a 'wretched' production.

[2] Or thirty-two if *Honoria and Mammon* and *A Contention for Honour and Riches* be counted as one.

thus generally possess the great merit of virtual if not actual unity, although, especially in his earlier works, he seems to like to concentrate the comic interest in a single scene,—an example too readily commending itself to those servants of popularity who love to convert comedies into 'drolls' or farces by leaving out what will not 'draw' the mob [1].

The variety of his themes.

In his choice of themes Shirley's range is, if not absolutely wide, yet sufficiently varied to give to his plays a considerable multiplicity of interest. Religious heroism furnished him with the subject of one only—and that by no means the most successful—of his dramas; but political ambition furnished a motive of which he made effective use; and in the treatment of the passion of love he succeeds equally in depicting the cruelty of selfish and the sweetness of self-sacrificing affection. If in reproducing the former he falls short of the white heat of Ford, he more than surpasses his contemporary in illustrating the beauty of love's noblest fruit—self-abnegation.

His debts to others not such as to interfere with his independence as a dramatic poet.

It was the fortune—good or bad—of Shirley to have the entire volume so to speak of what is best in our dramatic literature open before him. He could not write without a consciousness of the creations which had preceded or were contemporary with his own; and this consciousness exhibits itself in an abundance of reminiscences. Those which relate to the greatest of all his predecessors have been already noted. The powerful influence of Webster is likewise perceptible in one if not more of Shirley's tragic productions. Yet upon the whole the independence of his workmanship is in this respect also noteworthy; and his knowledge of the bent of his own creative powers was too sure to allow him to imitate (except incidentally) writers not artistically congenial to himself. He appears to have possessed a very lucid insight into matters of style and versification [2]; but he was sufficiently master of both to avoid too close an adherence to any particular model.

[1] See *e.g.* *The Maid's Revenge* (iii. 2: Sharkino's study); *The Wedding* (iv. 3: the burlesque duel); *The Traitor* (iii. 1: the mock trial for treason); *The Young Admiral* (iv. 1: Pazzorello's being rendered free 'from sword and gun').

[2] See the passage on the use and abuse of epithets in *Love in a Maze* (ii. 2),

His fertility and skill in the construction of plots, his manifest tact in suiting the taste of his public, and perhaps also in accommodating his plays to the gifts of the actors who were to perform them [1],—in a word, his talents as a writer for the theatre, should not be allowed to obscure qualities of another kind undoubtedly equally characteristic of him. In few of our dramatists will be found so many passages of a poetic beauty, elaborate indeed, but at the same time genuine and finding its expression in imagery at once original and appropriate. Shirley had a sense of the picturesque, which would render many of these passages admirable themes for a painter who would allow them to linger in his mind; the hues and shades of the seasons of the year, and of the changes of day and night, and the world of flowers in particular, left their delicate impression upon the receptive fancy of this true poet. The reader may perhaps thank me for directing his attention to some of these passages in a note [2].

His numerous passages of poetic and picturesque beauty.

Shirley in my opinion excels less in comic than in serious scenes and characters; but, besides a keen power of observation which displays itself in many lifelike sketches of contemporary foibles and follies, he was possessed of a considerable amount of humour and is not devoid of occasional flashes of wit. There is however nothing in which the change from the pre- to the post-Restoration drama is more marked, than in the contrast observable in this respect between the comic dramatists of the reign of Charles II and the last of the more eminent dramatic authors of the previous generation. Passages might be

Shirley's comic powers.

His comedy differs from that of the post-Restoration period.

and the satire against word-painting in love-poetry in *The Sisters* (iv. 2). The latter may have suggested Newman's diatribe in Glapthorne's *Albertus Wallenstein* (ii. 2).

[1] It is curious to note how dramatic authors were beginning to pay respect to the actors. See the Dedication to *The Grateful Servant*.

[2] See, besides those already cited from *The Coronation*, *The Doubtful Heir*, &c., the following: *The Brothers* (i. 1: 'Her eye did seem' &c., already noticed by Dr. Farmer); *The Witty Fair One* (i. 2: 'So breaks the day' &c.); *The Wedding* (ii. 2: 'Draw, imagine all' &c.); the truly grand speech of Montalto in *The Traitor* (ii. 2, beginning 'It will come'); the speech of Corybreus in *St. Patrick for Ireland* (ii. 1, beginning 'Yes, and my rivals too'); and Manuel's soliloquy in *The Court Secret* (iv. 2);—a by no means exhaustive list.

quoted to show that, had Shirley after the Restoration cared to resume his labours for the stage, it would not have been difficult for him to train himself to the brilliancy of dialogue and the flash of repartee in which Congreve and his contemporaries excelled. But the traditions of a stronger and manlier style of comedy are still perceptible in the last great writer of the old drama; he still, though not with uniform success, sought to conceive comic characters standing on a broader and more solid basis, and to furnish types of human nature, not mere conventional representatives of the society which filled *Hyde Park*, or which flitted round the lady president of a fashionable *Ball*.

His morality likewise differs from that of his successors.

And, as I have referred to the comparison which inevitably suggests itself between the last of our more eminent pre-Restoration dramatists and their less glorious successors, I may advert in conclusion to another point, of greater importance, though not admitting of a more than passing notice here. It has been asked, What real difference is there between the morality of a Congreve and that of a Shirley? Is not sin equally rampant in the pages of both? Is there any necessity to draw nice distinctions between degrees of licentiousness, when the greater and the less degree (supposing a difference to exist) are equally intolerable? In answer to such questions, I can only say that Shirley seems to me less amenable than other and earlier writers to the charge of habitual grossness and licentiousness of expression; and that from the comic dramatists of the post-Restoration period (or at least from some of the most prominent among them) he differs in this all-important point, that his purpose is almost uniformly moral. There is no play of his in which the victory of vice over virtue is represented in an attractive, or even in a ludicrous light; he is no disciple of the social heresy that the pleasures of one class have a right to pollute the morals of another; he believes in the beauty of purity, and does homage to its inborn strength. His plays are not fit reading for the young and inexperienced; neither are those of Massinger or Thomas Heywood, whose moral tendency few will dispute; but with the exception of

Heywood and of Shakspere I know of none among our pre-Restoration dramatists who deserves less than Shirley to be singled out for condemnation as an offender against principles which indeed in his generation and with his lights he helped to honour and uphold [1].

Minor dramatists of this period.

A considerable number of authors remain to be briefly noticed as having contributed, each after his kind, to the dramatic literature of the reigns of James I and Charles I. To group them on any strict principle of sequence is, except in particular instances, impossible; nor are the dramatic works of many of them of sufficient importance to make it worth while to engage in any such attempt. A large number of these dramatists belonged to the circle which acknowledged Jonson as its chief; and among these the precedence may be given to one who, in spite of the proverb, had the best reason to recognise the pre-eminence of his master.

Richard Brome (*temp.* Charles I).

His connexion with Jonson.

Of RICHARD BROME (already mentioned [2] as joint author with Thomas Heywood of *The Late Lancashire Witches*) we possess not less than fifteen independently-written plays [3]. We know nothing as to his life, except the significant fact that in his earlier days he was servant to Ben Jonson. In recording this circumstance in some very characteristic, but not very refined, verses in commendation of Brome's first play, *The Northern Lasse* (printed 1632), Jonson addresses the author as 'my faithful servant, and (by his continu'd virtue) my loving friend;' states that the applause bestowed on the play in question was bestowed justly, inasmuch as it exhibits

> 'observation of those comick laws,
> Which I, your master, first did teach the age.

[1] I cannot better close these observations than with a quotation from the lines addressed to Shirley by the dramatist and historian May, which I borrow from the *Quarterly* Reviewer:

> 'All Muses are not guiltless; but such strains
> As thine deserve, if I may verdict give,
> In sober, chaste, and learned times to live.'

[2] *Ante*, p. 121.

[3] They have recently been reprinted in a collected form in 3 vols., 1873. —Five of Richard Brome's plays were posthumously printed (in 1653) by his namesake Alexander; others at still later dates.

You learnt it well, and for it serv'd your time,—
A 'prenticeship, which few do now-a-days[1].'

Shirley too, in his commendatory verses on Brome's last play[2], *The Jovial Crew*, says that Brome was 'by great Jonson once made free o' the Trade;' and Brome himself was naturally proud of the connexion. Of one of his plays[3] he speaks, in the Prologue to it, as

'written, when
It bore just judgment, and the seal of Ben;'

His modesty and his self-consciousness as a dramatist.

and in the Epilogue to another[4] he appears again to refer with veneration to the memory of his master. For the rest, Brome, though he seems, besides popular success, to have enjoyed the good-will of more than one contemporary dramatist of note, exhibits an amusing mixture of modesty and self-consciousness as a dramatic author. He repeatedly begs his audience not to expect more than they will find; all he pretends to is 'but Mirth and Sense[5];' he is content to term himself a 'Playmaker,' without aspiring as yet to the names of 'Author, or Poet,' any more than to the office of Laureate[6]; 'a little wit, less learning, no Poetry' is all he dare boast[7]; but though he 'scarce ever durst rank himself above the worst of Poets,' 'most that he has writ has past the rest, And found good approbation of the best[8];' and though he only professes to help to keep alive 'the weakest branch of the stage,' *i.e.* that species of comedy which treats of 'low and home-bred subjects,' he questions whether it is in truth the weakest, or whether it be not

'as hard a labour for the Muse
To move the Earth, as to dislodge a Star[9].'

[1] He must have been in Jonson's service as early as 1614; for he is mentioned by name as the poet's 'man' in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*.

[2] He says in the Dedication that this play 'had the luck to tumble last of all in the epidemical ruin of the scene.' Richard Brome therefore was active as a playwright up to the time of the closing of the theatres, and did not live to see their re-opening.

[3] *The City Wit.*

[4] *The Court Beggar.*

[5] Prologue to *The Novella.*

[6] Prologue to *The Damoiselle.*

[7] Prologue to *The Love-Sick Court.*

[8] Prologue to *The Queen's Exchange.*

[9] Prologue to *The Antipodes.*

Richard Brome appears to have deserved the success he achieved by two qualities deserving high respect in a literary man—a knowledge of his own powers and diligence in training them. Of his plays the great majority are comedies, generally well-constructed and not deficient in a certain power of characterisation, dealing with themes from everyday life and illustrating its manners. The plots are rarely novel enough to be interesting; and the characters are the familiar types of later Elisabethan comedy—decayed country-gentlemen, knights contemptible in various ways, gallants and gulls, city usurers, city wives and widows, and so forth. Plays of this ordinary and in the end wearisome class are *A Mad Couple Well-Match'd* (printed 1653), *The Court Beggar* (printed 1653[1]), *The City Wit* (printed 1653[2]), *The Sparagus Garden* (acted 1635), *The Covent Garden Weeded* (printed 1659[3]), *The New Academy, or The New Exchange* (printed 1659). In *The Northern Lasse*, already mentioned as Brome's earliest and apparently one of his most popular plays, there is a pathetic character—that of the heroine, a deserted country-girl, who goes melancholy mad like the Jailor's Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The character seems to have struck the public as original; but it has no exceptional merit. There are similar touches of pathos in the 'poor wench' Phillis' reminiscences of her unhappy mother in *The Damoiselle, or The New Ordinary* (printed 1653), but the play is otherwise of a common type.

Brome's comedies of manners.

In others of his works Brome approaches a more ambitious

[1] This is one of Brome's most amusing comedies. The old knight turned speculator, Sir Arthur Mendicant, is a happy attempt in Jonson's manner. The projectors are diverting, with the treasure of the Indies locked up—all in bullion—in their chests at home, and not so much as change for a shilling in their pockets. One of their schemes is a floating play-house. A mask is introduced into this play.

[2] In this may be noted the character of Sarpego, the pedant, as quite in Jonson's manner. Pyannet's question about the honesty of London tradesmen is worth quoting: 'Why are your wares gumm'd; your shops dark; your Prices writ in strange characters? What, for honesty?' (Act ii.)

[3] These two plays are in parts extremely coarse. In *The Covent Garden Weeded* (iii. 1) may be found the items of a tavern bill of the period, which are very realistically gone through on the stage by guests and drawer.

His romantic comedies

species—that of romantic comedy of intrigue. The elaborate plot of *The English-Moor, or The Mock Marriage* (printed 1659) is ingeniously—though in one part [1] most extravagantly—contrived; and as an acting play this comedy deserves praise, while there is something like fire in some of the serious passages. Still more ambitious in conception, and resembling some of Fletcher's or Massinger's rather than Jonson's plays in manner, is the comedy of *The Love-Sick Court, or The Ambitious Politique* (printed 1659), which opens admirably and displays much spirit [2]. *The Queen's Exchange* (printed 1657) and *The Queen and Concubine* (printed 1659) are romantic dramas of which the main interest is serious. The former has a most extraordinary plot, in which reminiscences of *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and one or the other early comedy of 'Errors' may be said to be mixed up; but the action moves briskly, and the author seems equally sure of his audience in serious and in comic scenes [3]. The latter strikes me as the best of Brome's plays of this kind; the plot is here well constructed and carried out; and there is some force in the brave Sforza and some tenderness in his ill-used royal daughter, for whom again it might not be difficult to find Shaksperean prototypes.

and dramas of intrigue.

[1] A husband paints his wife black in order to conceal her.—The servant Buzzard in this play is evidently a relation of Jonson's Sir Amorous La-Foole (cf. vol. i. p. 570): 'The Buzzards are all gentlemen. We came in with the Conqueror. Our name (as the French has it) is Beau-desert; which signifies —Friends, what does it signify?' (iii. 2.)

[2] The opening is a good picture of a rebellion uncertain of its precise objection.—This play contains two good comic figures, Garrula who cannot tell her news for talking, and more especially the pedantic tutor Geron, who is 'all for apopthegms,' and has an illustration of something 'whilome' said or 'whilome' done for every occasion.

[3] See for resemblances to *King Lear*, i. 2, and *Macbeth*, act iii. The confusion between Anthynus and King Osriick is of the 'Error' type; but I do not mean in this latter case to suggest any specific resemblance.—Jeffery in this play is a very good Fool; see *e.g.* his reception of the news of the King's illness in the midst of the preparations for rejoicings: 'The King is sick.' *J.* 'Then let us drink his health.' 'He is sick exceedingly.' *J.* 'Then let us drink exceedingly,' &c. (ii. 2.)—The Genius who appears in this play (act iv) to encourage Anthynus (and help on the action by presenting a dumb-show) may have been suggested by Massinger's *Virgin Martyr*. I have noted more than one possible reminiscence of Massinger in Brome.

Originality was not the note of honest 'Dick Brome;' and even in his comedy of *A Joviall Crew, or The Merry Beggars* (acted 1641; printed 1652) it is possible that he was only availing himself of an idea which Fletcher's *The Beggar's Bush* or, less directly, more than one of Jonson's productions might have suggested to him. The notion of presenting on the stage a picture of the manners of a society of professional beggars is here wedded to a sufficiently improbable plot; and in the scenes illustrating the title of the play there is not much which to a modern reader will be otherwise than repulsive. Yet the work had a long life on the stage—a circumstance which I conjecture may be in part attributed to the extraordinary popularity of *The Beggar's Opera*[1]. Lastly, a more genuine effort in the direction of originality is Brome's comedy of *The Antipodes* (acted 1630; printed 1640), which partakes of the character of a moral mask. In order to cure the madness of a youthful traveller, his physician presents to him, as a play within the play, the picture of a Utopia or world turned upside down. It would be interesting to know what suggested the notion to Brome—perhaps he had been looking into Bacon's *New Atlantis* (published 1627); more probably he had taken the hint from Jonson's mask of *The World in the Moon* (1620)[2].

Brome's A Jovial Crew (1641).

The Antipodes (1630).

The above plays, with the addition of one which I have preferred to pass by, comprise the dramatic remains of an author whose manifest and confessed lack of any poetic gifts enables us to judge with tolerable accuracy of what the later developements of the Elisabethan drama would have been, if left in the hands of skilled and trained workmen devoid of individual literary genius. It would not be quite fair to set down Richard Brome as a mere imitator of his master Ben Jonson. Doubtless

Richard Brome a type of the skilful playwright without original genius.

[1] This was produced in 1728; and Brome's play was itself revived, adapted as an 'Opera,' in 1731, in which shape it seems to have been performed as late as 1791.

[2] The *New Atlantis* is referred to in Cartwright's *Ordinary* (ii. 3). Brome's comedy contains some curious observations on the progress of the actor's art on the English stage (see ii. 2). Among the Antipodes 'all their poets are Puritanes.'

the author of *Bartholomew Fair* and *The Alchemist* guided his apprentice's hand where it proved most successful; and in his choice as well as execution of comic types Brome was obviously under the special influence of his master. But it seems to me that under other circumstances he might have imitated what was imitable in Fletcher or Massinger or Shirley with equal success; and that it is mainly an accident that he should have only occasionally engaged in attempts in the direction of the serious romantic drama. From this point of view the perusal of the works of a writer of Brome's calibre is not without its use; few of our playwrights have known their craft better than he; and the tastes of the times are more safely to be estimated from such a series of plays as his, than from a study of works exhibiting real individuality of mind.

Thomas Randolph (1605–1634).

THOMAS RANDOLPH (1605–1634) during his short life gave evidence of considerable literary talent; as a poet he is reckoned among the minor members of the Fantastic School, and, like many of the group of writers to which he belonged, acknowledged the literary supremacy of Ben Jonson, whose 'adopted son' he was proud to call himself. His dramatic productions are the scholarly amusements of an academical wit; besides those briefly described below, he wrote *Aristippus, or The Jovial Philosopher* (1630); *The Conceited Pedler; The Jealous Lovers* (acted by the students of Trinity College, Cambridge, of which Randolph was a fellow; printed 1632[1]); and *Hey for Honesty, Down with Knavery*, a version of the *Plutus* of Aristophanes (posthumously published in 1651).

The more remarkable of Randolph's generally accessible plays[2] is an interesting illustration of the effect produced in literary minds by Jonson's theories and examples of comedy of character. *The Muse's Looking-Glasse* (printed

[1] An account of the circumstances under which this play was produced, in opposition to Peter Hausted's (of Queen's) *The Rival Friends*, will be found in Masson's *Life of Milton*, i. 218.

[2] An edition of all his plays is announced.

1638[1]) is modestly described by the personage who acts as a kind of presenter to the piece as— His The Muse's Looking-Glass (pr. 1638).

> 'a mere Olla Podrida,
> A medley of ill-plac'd, and worse-penn'd humours'—

and the author's intention is stated to be to show, in a succession of scenes,

> 'How comedy presents each single vice
> Ridiculous'—

these vices being introduced in pairs, according to the Aristotelian theory, as the opposite extremes of virtues. The play is therefore nothing but a satire in dramatic form, with the secondary object of vindicating the moral power of comedy. Humorously enough, the 'mask' of the successive characters, which concludes with the glorification of 'golden Mediocrity' as the 'mother of Virtues[2],' is exhibited by a player, Roscius, before two Puritan spectators, Bird the featherman and Mrs. Flowerdew, a haberdasher of small wares, who are thereby brought to recognise the value of comedy as the inheritress of the virtue of the glass sent by Apollo. Admirably written, this dramatic satire exhibits the influence of Jonson's example upon his pupil; but it should be observed that the scholarly Randolph differs from his master in the fact that he dispenses with the element of action, and therefore neither produces, nor intends to produce, a drama. Randolph's *Amyntas, or The Impossible Dowry* (acted before the King and Queen at Whitehall, and first printed in 1638[3]) is a pastoral drama of the Italian type. Though in general deficient in poetic touch, it is by no means devoid of freshness and even occasional vigour of style. The plot and the *dramatis personae* are made up of the materials familiar to this species of production. The Amyntas (pr. 1638).

[1] Printed in Dodsley's *Old Plays* (1825), vol. ix.

[2] All the Virtues joining in a dance, seem to Mrs. Flowerdew 'the Family of Love' (cf. *ante*, p. 86). The first scene, in which the Puritans are still wholly unconverted, is an amusing satire on the prejudice cherished against the drama in a neighbourhood (Blackfriars) where it had one of its chief abodes.

[3] So Dodsley and *Biographia Dramatica*. My copy is an Oxford 12mo. of 1640.

wrath of Ceres and a couple of obscure oracles[1] form the pivots of the action, which ingeniously enough combines its more or less artificial elements into a well-connected whole. The chief representatives of sentiment are an outlawed father, a mad lover, and three shepherdesses severally described as 'sad,' 'distressed,' and 'wavering;' and the comic personages form a vivacious crew who carry on amongst themselves a practical joke unmistakeably akin to the imposition practised upon Falstaff in the last act of *The Merry Wives*[2]. But the dialogue is in general almost unduly brisk; and the spirit of the whole production undoubtedly raises it above the level of the commonplace. It is the work of a hand of obvious dramatic ability, here unfortunately applied to an utterly artificial species[3].

William Cartwright (1611 or 1615–1643).

WILLIAM CARTWRIGHT (1611 or 1615–1643), a prominent member of the Fantastic School of poets who flourished in the first two Stuart reigns, has likewise left us a few dramatic works. Cartwright, who enjoyed great celebrity as a 'most florid and seraphical preacher' in the University of Oxford, was an enthusiastic adherent of the royal cause, for his fidelity to which he had to suffer imprisonment. The poetical works of this author, who seems to have enjoyed an unusual degree of favour with his literary contemporaries[4], are chiefly valuable to a student of literature

[1] One of these explains the second title of the play. Amyntas goes mad in consequence of an oracle which makes his marriage conditional on paying as a dowry 'that which he has not, may not, cannot have.' Answer (as revealed by Echo, in a scene repeating a device familiar to both pastoral literature and the drama): a husband.

[2] This scene (iii. 4) is printed in Halliwell's *Illustrations of the Fairy Mythology of a Midsummer Night's Dream* (*Shakesp. Soc. Publ.*, 1845). The sham fairies recite some rhymed Latin verses, by no means bad.—By the bye, the mad Amyntas' delusion (iii. 3) that Mopsus is a dog (with a fine classical pedigree) was doubtless suggested by a well-known passage in *King Lear*.

[3] Randolph's Amyntas has, as already stated (vol. i. p. 583, note), no connexion in plot with Tasso's *Aminta*.

[4] In my copy of Cartwright's *Comedies, Tragi-Comedies, with other Poems* (1651) a not inconsiderable part of the volume is filled by memorial and commendatory verses, among them contributions by H. Lawes (who set some of Cartwright's songs to music) and Izaak Walton. The rest are to a large extent by Oxonians and Templars; and though it will not be forgotten that the poets

as examples of the extreme developement of panegyrical poetry—a species so wont to soar into the dizziest heights in order to drop into the profoundest bathos. Cartwright's muse devoted herself with special willingness to singing the praises of the King, the Queen, and all the Royal Family—as well as of great noblemen, bishops, and peeresses, and here and there a man of letters. The extravagant conceits with which he intersperses his poetry are signally characteristic of the school to which he belongs, and though he translated parts of both Horace and Martial, he learnt from neither of them the grace which lies in simplicity.

His 'tragi-comedies.'

This want of simplicity is apparent in the three 'tragi-comedies' which remain from the hand of this author. They are all thoroughly fantastic in both subject and treatment; and a fatal artificiality deprives them of any real interest. The story of *The Royal Slave* (acted before the King and Queen at Christ Church in 1636, and afterwards performed at Hampton Court) is that of an Ephesian, prisoner at the court of the King of Persia, who is 'adorned with all the Robes of Majesty' and invested with 'all Privileges for three full days, that he may do what he will, and then certainly be led to death.' Within these three days his heroic courage and magnanimity converts King Arsamnes into an admiring friend and ally. The plot of *The Lady-Errant* (first printed 1651) is even more fanciful; it is in part a reproduction of the fancy of a women's commonwealth already made familiar to the stage by Fletcher's *The Sea Voyage*[1]; but the character of the

The Royal Slave (1636).

The Lady-Errant (pr. 1651).

of this age, especially those who were 'sworn of the tribe of Ben,' constituted a kind of mutual congratulation society, the *consensus* is in this case particularly striking. Ben Jonson himself said of Cartwright, in his own venerable way: 'My son Cartwright writes all like a man.' Dr. Fell Bishop of Oxford declared that 'Cartwright was the utmost man could come to.' King Charles I wore mourning on the day of his funeral. Cartwright's hatred of the Puritans is sufficiently apparent from *The Ordinary*; see especially the conclusion, with its reference to the migrations to New England, where a ready reception is promised to such as will nose

'a little treason 'gainst the King,
Bark something at the bishops.'

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 218.

Lady-Errant herself is not very intelligible, and the conduct of the whole action by no means dramatically effective.

The Siege (pr. 1651).

Finally, *The Siege, or Love's Convert* (first printed 1651) borrows part of its plot from a not very impressive anecdote related of Pausanias by Plutarch in his *Life of Cimon*. According to the adaptation of the story given in the play, Leucasia, a virgin of Byzantium, is sent as a sacrifice to the tyrant Misander, whom her father has persuaded her to kill in his slumbers, but on suddenly awaking he stabs her while she is withdrawing irresolute. There is nothing dramatic in this; and the remainder of the play is occupied in the conversion of the tyrant by Leucasia's eloquence into a virtuous lover.

All these plays are thoroughly rhetorical in manner. The serious dialogue is elevated in sentiment, and occasionally graceful in form; but there is no real play of passion or depth of pathos springing from a truly dramatic imagination. The comic scenes are almost wholly conventional; for of comic power Cartwright seems to have been devoid. He was without the wider experience of men and manners which in a comic dramatist so often serves as a substitute for originality; and though in his comedy of

His The Ordinary (pr. 1651).

The Ordinary (first printed 1651) he undertook to essay a picture of real life in Jonson's manner, he confesses in the Prologue that he has only derived his materials at second-hand [1]. The result is that this play is one of the least enjoyable productions of its kind. A flimsy plot serves as the opportunity for depicting the ways of life of the scum of London society, here introduced as a gang of rascals, ruffians, and tricksters who use as the centre of their operations a dining-club at a tavern,—the 'Ordinary' which gives its name to the play. Jonson was the model whom Cartwright followed in passages as well as in the general conception of this comedy [2]; but the notion of its

[1] 'His conversation will not yet supply
Follies enough to make a comedy;
. . . . . nor act we here
Scenes, which perhaps you should see liv'd elsewhere.'

[2] See Gifford's note to Jonson's *Alchemist* (i. 1; Cunningham, ii. 13); and cf.,

scene might have been suggested by numerous passages in other dramatists[1]. Cartwright's comic styles are equally fluent and serious; but he has no originality of characterisation[2], and no native spring of humour. In occasional grossness the Oxford clergyman was capable of equalling, if not surpassing, any of his predecessors or contemporaries.

Jasper Mayne (1604–1672).

JASPER MAYNE (1604–1672), a clergyman and a man of learning (he translated Lucian's *Dialogues*), and a devoted royalist, who was after the Restoration rewarded for his self-sacrificing loyalty by a canonry and an archdeaconry (of Chichester), published two plays. He was a friend of Cartwright and an admirer of Jonson[3]. To his comedy of *The City-Match*[4] (1639) he deprecates the application of severe criticism, and it has indeed little to commend it except a certain fluency of style. The action is in part extravagantly farcical[5], and the course it takes is unsatisfactory from a moral point of view. So ephemeral a production is not to be broken on a wheel; but straws show how the wind lies. It is certainly astonishing to find such a play produced at Whitehall from the hand of a divine afterwards described as 'theologus accurate doctus et annunciator evangelii disertus[6].'

His The City-Match (1639).

Thomas May (1595–1650).

THOMAS MAY (1595–1650) is better known as the historian of the Long Parliament than as a dramatist; but he seems in his earlier days to have moved in the society of the Court, and according to Clarendon only changed sides on account of a personal disappointment. The same authority, after speaking highly of May's literary abilities,

as having suggested the elaborate description of a 'military dinner' in *The Ordinary* (ii. 1), the speech of the Cook in Jonson's mask of *Neptune's Triumph*.

[1] See especially Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* (*Works*, ii. 212).

[2] The antiquary Moth, who talks in what is meant for Chaucerian English, is not a felicitous effort.

[3] See the extravagantly encomiastic lines by him prefixed to Cartwright's *Poems*, and his contribution to *Jonsonus Virbius*.

[4] Printed in vol. ix of Dodsley (1825).

[5] The funny scene in which the drunken Timothy is exhibited as a talking fish (iii. 2) recalls Pope's mummy; Scathrift's pun is not bad, where he says he hates his son Tim worse than a *privy-seal*—we are in Charles I's reign.

[6] Mayne's other play, a 'tragi-comedy' called *The Amorous War*, is described by Geneste, x. 71.

observes that he 'seemed to all men to have lost his wits when he left his honesty; and so shortly after died miserable and neglected, and deserves to be forgotten[1].' Without attaching too much importance to this ebullition of spleen on the part of a former friend, one must allow that the dry and meagre style of the parliamentary historiographer[2] contrasts strangely with the fluency and occasional grace characterising two at least of May's dramatic productions. These qualities appear in *The Old Couple* (printed 1658[3]), a rhetorical comedy in verse, undistinguished by any dramatic merits. They are more strikingly manifest in *The Heir* (acted 1620), a comedy which, notwithstanding the objectionable nature of its under-plot, is in many respects deserving of praise. Its main plot[4] is both ingenious and interesting; the action is carried on with great spirit; and there is some genuine pathos, as well as considerable beauty of diction, in several passages of the play[5].

His The Old Couple (pr. 1658)

and The Heir (1620).

The well-known name of SIR JOHN SUCKLING (1608–1641 or 1642) also deserves mention among those of the dramatists of this period. A favourite of society, a traveller

Sir John Suckling (1608–1641 or 1642).

[1] Part of this passage is quoted in Dodsley's Introduction to *The Heir*. Cf. Clarendon's *Life*, vol. i. pp. 34, 39 (edition of 1827). May's death may have been miserable in one sense (see the account of it in Dodsley); but he was buried in Westminster Abbey, whence his remains were cast out after the Restoration.

[2] May was appointed Historiographer by the Parliament, and in this capacity in 1650 published his *History of the Long Parliament*, a dry and unreadable compendium valuable only for its matter.

[3] Printed in Dodsley, vol. x (1825), and in *The Ancient British Drama*. A passage on misers and their heirs in Pope's *Moral Essays* (iii. 170) seems justly to have been traced to some lines spoken by Euphues in act iii of this drama. (One of the personages in *The Heir* likewise bears this name.)

[4] It turns principally on the attempt of a cruel father, by giving out his absent son as dead, to attract a wealthy suitor to his daughter and 'heir,'—a device frustrated by the re-appearance of the son and the Juliet-like love of Leucothoë for the son of her father's enemy.—It is curious that May should have imitated a well-known passage in *Macbeth* (v. 5: 'The time has been' &c.) in both of these dramas (*The Old Couple*, act ii, and *The Heir*, iii. 1). A scene in *The Heir* (iv. 1) adds another to the many examples already quoted (vol. i. p. 403) of imitations of Dogberry's address to the Watch in *Much Ado about Nothing*.—*The Heir* is printed in Dodsley, vol. viii (1825).

[5] May's other plays were tragedies—a *Cleopatra*, a *Julia Agrippina*, and an *Antigone*. See Geneste, x. 49.

and a campaigner—he served under Gustavus Adolphus, and in 1639 raised, at a cost their services by no means repaid, a troop of horse for King Charles against the Scotch—'good, easy Suckling' (as one of Steele's heroines calls him) seems to have addressed himself to authorship in the same spirit in which he undertook his other exploits. Both his verse and his prose, though not extensive in quantity, are so full of vivacity that he holds a place of his own among the Cavalier poets of his times. None of his writings are more sparkling and pleasing than passages of his odd comedy of *The Goblins*[1] (printed 1646), a production which defies—and as a drama hardly deserves—analysis. The conduct of its plot is at once dragging and breathless; but in order to explain the title and general character of the piece, it will suffice to say that the goblins are no goblins, but thieves who under their chief Tamoren frighten the kingdom of 'Francelia' by their devils' pranks, and deal out a rough kind of justice in the fashion of Robin Hood and his merry men; and that this chief is in reality not a king of thieves at all, but the surviving head of a fallen noble family. The course of the action is perfectly bewildering; but opportunity is found for much pretty writing—especially in the love-scenes of the innocent little Reginella—and for some smart touches of literary and social criticism. It is however difficult to understand what effect this sprightly fancy could have had as an acted play, except that the rapid succession of its scenes and the intermixture of lively dialogue with music, songs, and a superabundance of action may have taken away the breath of the spectators, and brought them with victorious speed to the rather calmer close of the piece[2].

His The Goblins (pr. 1646).

Suckling's tragedy of *Aglaura*[3] (printed 1646) is in many of its passages almost equally characteristic of its author,

Aglaura (pr. 1646).

[1] *The Poems, Plays, and other Remains of Sir John Suckling. With Life, &c.* By W. C. Hazlitt (2 vols., 1874).

[2] Dryden, in the Preface to *The Tempest*, declares that Suckling's Reginella is 'an open imitation of Shakspere's Miranda,' and that 'his spirits, though counterfeit, yet are copies from Ariel.'

[3] The Folio edition of *Aglaura* was ridiculed for its size and amount of

whose wit and lyric power make their own opportunities[1] for themselves in the midst of a sombre and sanguinary plot. The play is likewise distinguished among the tragedies of this period by a rapidity of action which seems to have been a necessity to the writer; and by some touches of genuine passion. In the last act (where the heroine by a fatal error kills her husband instead of the lascivious King) the horrors are piled up so unsparingly that for the reproduction of the play at the Court the author was fain to compose another conclusion to it, in which both the King and Aglaura are kept alive[2]. *The Sad One* (printed 1658), which is in a fragmentary condition, has a general resemblance to *Aglaura*, and contains one or two of those vigorous and pleasing descriptive touches in which the author of *The Wedding* excelled.

The Sad One (pr. 1658).

Brennoralt (pr. 1646).

The tragedy of *Brennoralt* (printed 1646) is a less effective play than *Aglaura*, inasmuch as the plot lacks real concentration of interest. The relation between Almerius and Iphigene, after apparently resembling that between the *Two Noble Kinsmen* in Fletcher's tragedy, turns out to have been one of attraction between a man and a disguised woman; and the character of the hero proper of the drama, the noble-minded 'discontent' Brennoralt, savours of a rhetorical effort. The play is however curious as containing very palpable allusions to the political situation of the times—and there is little difficulty in identifying the

margin in some rather sprightly lines by Richard Brome (see *Works*, vol. ii), who ought to have lived in our days of duodecimos: 'Give me,' he says,

'the sociable Pocket-books.
These empty Folios only please the Cooks.'

[1] The former partly in the wit-combat between the 'platonique' Semanthe (who is 'of the new religion in love,' preached by Fletcher's Faithful Shepherdess and by Lovel in Jonson's *The New Inn*) and two young Lords 'antiplatoniques;' the latter in two well-known songs, 'Why so pale and wan, fond Lover,' and 'No, no, fair Heretic' (iv. 1)—which are also printed among Suckling's miscellaneous poems.

[2] 'Tis strange perchance (you'll think) that she that died
At Christmas, should at Easter be a bride.'

Prologue to the Court.

Flecknoe, in his *Short Discourse on the English Stage* (cited by Geneste, x. 250), mentions a witty saying with respect to *Aglaura*, 'that 'twas full of fine flowers, but they seemed rather stuck, than growing there.'

'Lithuanians' (the scene of the play is laid in Poland) who 'had of all least reason' to rebel—

> 'For would the King be unjust to you, he cannot:
> Where there's so little to be had[1].'

Shakerley Marmion (d. 1639).

SHAKERLEY MARMION (who died in 1639, after returning sick from York, on his way home from the expedition against the Scotch, in which he had served the King in Sir John Suckling's troop) was author of a few dramatic works, of which I am only acquainted with the comedy of *The Antiquary* (printed 1641[2]). It is written with some elegance of manner; but the personage who gives his name to the play, the antiquary Veterano, is the mere sketch of a character; and his foible, which has provoked so much excellent literary satire, is not so depicted as to raise it to the dignity of a 'humour.' True comic genius is shown by the use which it makes of a happily invented figure, not by the mere invention or reproduction of the figure itself.

His The Antiquary (pr. 1641).

Sir John Denham (1615–1688).

SIR JOHN DENHAM (1615–1688), the author of *Cooper's Hill*, which he published when with the King at Oxford in 1643, and one of the most dignified of the Cavalier poets, seems only to have written a single play. *The Sophy*[3] was printed in 1641, as acted by the King's Servants at Blackfriars, and met with extraordinary praise[4]. Its success is doubtless attributable, less to the impressive character of its versification—Denham's 'majesty' and 'strength' are acknowledged by Dryden and Pope, and in this respect *The Sophy* is worthy of its author—than to the extremely pathetic character of its central situation. The machinations of the villainous favourite (Haly) of the King of

His The Sophy (pr. 1641).

[1] That the Scotch are referred to, is further proved by the references to 'religion' as one of the causes of the rebellion which seeks to secure the support of Brennoralt.

[2] Printed in *The Ancient British Drama*, vol. iii, and in Dodsley, vol. x (1827).

[3] It is printed in the 12mo. edition of Denham's *Poems &c.*, of which the seventh edition (1769) is before me.

[4] Waller said of its author, that 'he broke out like the Irish rebellion, threescore thousand strong, when nobody was aware, or in the least suspected it.'—*The Sophy* is (in a very exceptional way) referred to by name in the contemporary play of *Andromana* (*ante*, p. 333, note), iii. 5.

Persia (Abas) induce the latter to imprison and cause to be blinded his noble son (Merza). Half-maddened by his injuries, the Prince is about to revenge himself on his father by taking the life of his own little daughter (Fatyma), when he is recalled to his better self by the child's appeal to the love of her mother, his faithful wife (Erythaea). The Prince is poisoned by the intriguer, at the moment when deliverance is at hand, and the King dies haunted by the memory of his many crimes—and the task of vengeance upon the villainous Haly is left to the youthful Sophy, Prince Merza's son.

The style of this tragedy is rhetorical, but sustained; its value was overrated by Denham's contemporaries, but it is certainly one of the best tragedies of its time, and had doubtless been produced under the inspiration of worthy models[1]. In the political wisdom which it teaches in one of its most striking scenes something nobler than party spirit reveals itself; and a lesson is taught to kings as well as rebels who misuse religion as an instrument or as a pretext[2].

After these faithful friends of royalty may be mentioned a dramatist who in politics seems to have preferred to take a less outwardly consistent path.

William Habington (1605–1654).

WILLIAM HABINGTON (1605–1654), productive both as a historian and a poet, has left us a 'tragi-comedy,' *The Queene of Arragon*[3] (1640), which shows the author to have

[1] There is some similitude between the plot of *The Sophy* and that of Chapman's *Revenge for Honour* (*ante*, p. 20); and a certain likeness between the two dramatists in the moral gravity of their political thought. [2] See iv. 1.

[3] Printed in Dodsley (1825), vol. ix. It was originally given to the press, against the author's consent, by Philip Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, who had as Lord Chamberlain caused it to be acted at Court, where it was well received. (See also Collier, ii. 98.) It was revived after the Restoration, with a Prologue and Epilogue by the author of *Hudibras*. This Prologue is rather witty upon the critics who,

> 'decrying all of all that write,
> Think to erect a Trade of judging by't.
> Small Poetry, like other Heresies,
> By being persecuted multiplies'—

a remark which may be commended to the authors of slashing articles on 'Minor Poets.'

been a man of a refinement of tone and elevation of sentiment not common among contemporary dramatists. The play, which is a romantic drama in Shirley's manner, cannot however be commended either for neatness of construction or for vigour of action, and the merits which it possesses are not those which qualify a writer to shine as a dramatist. What strikes me as most remarkable in this production, is certain passages which seem to show that Habington was capable of thinking for himself on political and social questions, instead of falling in with the extravagant worship of existing institutions usual to the dramatic authors of his times. The facts recorded of his life agree with the internal evidence of the passages in question[1].

Henry Glapthorne (*temp.* Charles I).

Of HENRY GLAPTHORNE[2] a sufficient number of plays

[1] See the speeches of Ascanio in iii. 1:

> "The stars shoot
> An equal influence on the open cottage
> Where the poor shepherd's child is rudely nurs'd
> And on the cradle where the prince is rock'd
> With care and whisper.
> *Quen.* And what hence infer you?
> *Asc.* That no distinction is 'tween man and man,
> But as his virtues add to him a glory,
> Or vices cloud him;'

and that of Decastro in v. 1 ('The acts of princes' &c.); and cf. the striking episode between Sanmartino and the Soldier in ii. 1, where there is a genuine burst of democratic spirit.—Habington, the son of a gentleman who narrowly escaped death in the days of the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, and who received part of his education at St. Omer, seems to have withstood the influences to which he was thus exposed; and later in life to have inclined to good relations with Oliver Cromwell. Independence of mind, perhaps fortified by his historical studies, seems accordingly to have to some degree separated him from the tendencies which birth, education, and position might have been expected to make him follow. Such phenomena are always worth noting. He appears too to have looked with dislike upon the vicious habits of Court life; he celebrated his mistress and wife under the name of *Castara;* and a passage in *The Queene of Arragon* (iv. 1) seems to testify to the same spirit.—The play by the bye contains a parody on Pistol's famous maxim in this form: 'Base is the wight that thinks.' (ii. 1.)

[2] *The Plays and Poems of Henry Glapthorne, now first collected, with Illustrative Notes and a Memoir of the Author.* 2 vols., 1874. (One of Mr. Pearson's reprints. The Memoir, which is swelled by some documentary evidence as to the profane language indulged in by *George* Glapthorne, whom the editor on no grounds whatever conjectures to have been the dramatist's brother, cites a critical article on Henry Glapthorne from *The Retrospective Review*, vol. x.)

His tragedies: Argalus and Parthenia (pr. 1639).

has been preserved to enable us to arrive at an estimate of his powers as a dramatist. This estimate is not likely to be a very high one. The most pleasing of his dramatic works is the pastoral tragedy of *Argalus and Parthenia* (printed 1639), which is founded upon one of the most charming episodes in Sidney's *Arcadia* (Bk. iii), already previously versified by Quarles. It cannot however be said that Glapthorne has succeeded in reproducing the delicate touches of pathos characterising this part of Sidney's romance; or that the comic element which he has added can be looked upon as a gain. The diction of the serious passages, though florid in its imagery, is not devoid of vigour; and in the scene of the duel between Argalus and Amphialus there is a touch of dramatic truthfulness which appears to me singularly effective[1].

The Ladies' Privilege (pr. 1640).

The romantic comedy of *The Ladies' Priviledge* (printed 1640) has received high praise; but its merits are almost entirely confined to the fluency, and occasional eloquence, of its diction. The plot is not only extravagant, but its point is, so to speak, broken off[2]; and what pathos some of the situations possess, lies in their intention rather than their execution.

[1] I refer to Argalus' death-swoon:

> 'Ha! Methinks I tread
> On slippery glass, my unsupporting feet
> Dance measures on light waves, and I am sinking
> Into the watery bosoms, there to rest
> For all eternity.'

(Act iv).—The dirge sung at the close of this play is an adaptation of the *Elegie upon the death of his Sister, Mrs. Priscilla Glapthorne*, published in the same year.

[2] The 'Ladies' Privilege' is the right of any virgin at Genoa, where the scene of the play lies, to free a condemned person by inducing him to marry her. To test his affection for her, Chrisea calls upon her betrothed, the victorious general Doria, to resign her hand and obtain for her that of his friend Vitelli, who is in love with her sister. Doria supposes himself, in a quarrel with Chrisea's kinsman Bonivet, to have killed the latter and is condemned to death. Chrisea refuses to exert her privilege, in order to prolong the trial to which she has put Doria; and the claim is made by another lady. Doria reluctantly accepts her hand; and though in the end everything ends happily, inasmuch as the lady turns out to be Doria's faithful page Sabelli in disguise, the contrast between his loyal fidelity and Chrisea's haughtiness thus fails to be carried to any real dramatic climax.

Albertus Wallenstein (pr. 1639).

Much inferior in style to both these plays, though possessing a special interest on account of its subject, is Glapthorne's only extant attempt at historical tragedy. This term is however in truth a misnomer in the case of *Albertus Wallenstein*, first printed in 1639, five years after the event which it commemorates. The death of Wallenstein was too extraordinary and mysterious an event to fail of attracting public attention in England[1]; and in this play we have the echo of some version of the transaction furnished to London *quidnuncs* by some Staple of News office of the day. For the love-intrigue and the double murder consequent upon it Glapthorne's invention may fairly be held responsible[2]. The scene of this anything but admirable play lies alternately at 'Egers' and at the Emperor's Court. Wallenstein is an ambitious ruffian who murders his son Albertus for engaging in an amour with one of the Duchess' women, and causes the latter to be hanged on the stage, in *Spanish Tragedy* fashion. His other son is married at 'Egers' to Emilia, daughter of 'Saxon Waymar.' Wallenstein—here we have a fortuitous resemblance to Schiller—is haunted by anticipations of his fate, and vainly seeks the repose of sleep before the murder, being haunted by the ghosts of the murdered 'Albertus and his lovely Bride.' 'Newman' (Schiller's Neumann) is a comic character of a gross cast. The play contains no allusions to Wallenstein's astrological pursuits, unless such a one be sought in the metaphor, in which he declares that he will not fall like a comet 'by his own fire consumed.' The whole is a crude and feeble attempt, which misses its effect altogether by representing Wallenstein as a vulgar domestic monster, who exclaims as he falls:

'I die,
Not for my ambition, but my cruelty[3].'

[1] It is I think referred to by Shirley.

[2] Wallenstein's sons are purely fictitious. No trace of any such personages exists in history.

[3] It is hardly necessary to observe that neither Schiller nor Coleridge appears to have been aware of the existence of Glapthorne's tragedy. A contemporary French play on the subject by Sarrasin, and an Italian, are mentioned by Elze in the Introduction to his edition of Chapman's *Alphonsus*, p. 24.

His comedies: The Hollander (1635).

Glapthorne's comedies are of no mark. *The Hollander* (written in 1635, published 1640) is a coarse production, though remarkable in some of its passages for the copious flow of imagery usual in its author. The play is curious for the expression which it gives to hatred of the Dutch.

Wit in a Constable (1639).

Wit in a Constable (written in 1639, and printed in the following year) is perhaps more acceptable as a picture of manners. The caricature of the University man who has made so indifferent a use of his library, and the palpable imitation of a famous scene in *Much Ado about Nothing* in Constable Busie's address to his watchmen (v. 1), will be noticed by the reader.

Glapthorne's fondness for poetic imagery.

This dramatist, as has been pointed out by a previous writer[1], resembles Shirley in style,—more especially in his love for poetic imagery. Glapthorne's metaphors taken from the world of flowers and from natural phenomena in general[2] pleasingly relieve the commonplace character of his ideas. In no other respect is he worthy of being singled out from the crowd of contemporary dramatists. He was also productive as an erotic and elegiac poet. Of his life nothing is known, except that he was clearly a devoted adherent of the Court party. One of his plays[3] is dedicated to Wentworth; some of his poems are addressed to royal or noble personages; and he wrote—in the fatal year 1642—a mournful lament on the empty palace of Whitehall, dedicated to his 'noble Friend and Gossip, Captaine Richard Lovelace[4].' The cause of his imprisonment, to which he refers in an earlier poem, is unknown. The publication of *Whitehall, and other Poems* in 1643 is the last trace we have of him. Two of his plays are known to have been acted after the Restoration.

His connexion with the Court party.

Other dramatists of the reigns

The above names include, so far as I am aware, all that are worthy of remembrance in the list of those dramatists

[1] Cf. *Memoir*, p. viii.

[2] See particularly *Argalus and Parthenia*, *The Hollander*, and *The Ladies' Privilege*.

[3] *Wit in a Constable*.

[4] Glapthorne's poetic mistress is Lucinda, as Lovelace's is Lucasta.

of the reigns of James I and Charles I who died before the outbreak of the Revolution, or did not resume their labours for the theatres after their re-opening, and of whom it is possible to form an opinion on the basis of extant plays. To these names may be added a few hardly deserving of special notice. In the earlier part of the period ROBERT TAILOR (otherwise unknown) wrote a play called *The Hog hath lost his Pearl*, an odd mixture of extravagant romance with equally extravagant farce, which obtained notoriety by being (in 1613) acted by sixteen London apprentices, who were stopped by the sheriffs before the end of the piece, 'some six or seven of them' being 'carried to perform the last act at Bridewell[1].' LODOWICK BARRY, the author of *Ram-Alley, or Merry-Tricks* (printed 1611), one of the most offensively coarse comedies of its kind, belongs to the same period[2]. And ROBERT DAVENPORT, though stated to have written his plays in the reign of Charles I, has been thought, and I believe justly, to have composed at least one of them, *The City Night-Cap* (printed in 1661), earlier[3]. Another dramatist of the reign of James I, possibly of an even earlier date, was LEWIS

of James I and Charles I.

Robert Tailor.

Lodowick Barry.

Robert Davenport.

Lewis Machin.

[1] According to a letter by Sir Henry Wotton, printed in the *Reliquiae Wottonianae*, and quoted in *The Ancient British Drama*, vol. iii, where the play is printed. Its serious plot is that of a crime against friendship very succinctly atoned for by repentance; the comic intrigue reads like a parody on Shylock and Jessica. The usurer Hog was thought to be the cause of offence, being identified by popular rumour with the unfortunately-named Lord Mayor of the day.—The everlasting device with Echo (cf. *ante*, p. 344, note 1) recurs in this worthless play.

[2] The author appears to have had a glimmering perception of the character of his comedy; for in the Prologue he promises that if his 'home-bred mirth' finds favour, he will labour till he produce something which the Puritans themselves may witness without offence.—A famous line from *Othello* is rather amusingly parodied in this play, which is printed in Dodsley, vol. v (1827).

[3] See *The Ancient British Drama*, vol. iii. The extremely unpleasant plot, which, as one of the characters observes at the opening, is

> 'an old point, and wondrous frequent
> In most of our Italian comedies,'

is, so to speak, burlesqued in the under-plot. Davenport's tragedy of *King John and Matilda*, stated by Geneste (x. 72) to be borrowed in a considerable degree from *The Death of Robert, Earl of Huntington* (cf. vol. i. p. 235), though written before the Civil War, was not printed till 1655.

MACHIN, whose only extant play, *The Dumb Knight*, was printed in 1608. It is by no means devoid of spirit and feeling; but the construction is rather rude; two ordeals by combat (see acts i and v) are more than enough for a single play[1]. Nothing whatever is known of the author.

Thomas Rawlins.

To the later part of our period belongs THOMAS RAWLINS (who was Engraver of the Mint under both Charles I and Charles II), the author of a tragedy called *The Rebellion*, which while containing one situation of surprising novelty, is otherwise unmarked by originality[2].

Nathaniel Richards.

Of NATHANIEL RICHARDS' (a 'familiar acquaintance,' according to his own statement, of Middleton) tragedy *Messalina the Roman Emperesse* (printed 1640) the name only, so far as I am aware, remains; and of the two

Richard Lovelace.

plays of RICHARD LOVELACE (1618–1658), celebrated as the author of *Lucasta*, neither the comedy called *The Scholar* nor the tragedy called *The Soldier* appears to have been printed.

Dramatists who wrote both before and after the Civil Wars and

Finally, more than one of the dramatists of the period beginning with the Restoration had already produced plays in that preceding the Revolution. Among these were Abraham Cowley[3], whose literary fame however con-

[1] The portion of the plot from which this so-called 'Historicall Comedy' takes its name is stated to be derived from Bandello; but this extravagantly romantic but not wholly uninteresting part of the action closes early in act iii. The rest of the serious action is occupied with the progress and overthrow of the machinations of the Duke of Epire (a kind of Gloster and Iago in one) against the King of Cyprus, his wife, and his friend Phylocles (once the Dumb Knight); but there is also a comic under-plot treating of the conjugal misfortunes of Prate, an 'orator' or advocate. *The Dumb Knight* is printed in Dodsley, vol. iv (1827).

[2] See *The Ancient British Drama*, vol. iii. From the commendatory verses *The Rebellion* would seem to have attracted great favour—doubtless on account of the novelty referred to above. The hero makes love and gains glory while under the disguise of—a tailor; and this brilliant notion furnishes the occasion for some scenes which recall Dekker's glorification of another handicraft (cf. *ante*, p. 39). The villain of the play bears the time-honoured name of 'Machvile.' (Cf. vol. i. p. 185, note 2). For the rest, *The Rebellion* is as eventful a concoction as any the 'Prentices can have applauded in the good old days.

[3] Of Cowley's dramatic works, the Pastoral Comedy of *Love's Riddle* and *The Guardian*, besides the academical comedy *Naufragium Joculare* noticed below, were written before the Restoration. *The Guardian*, as will be seen, was afterwards reproduced in an altered form and with a different name. *Love's Riddle*

Commonwealth periods.

nects itself more intimately with later times than with those now under review; two at least of the brothers Killigrew (*viz.* Thomas and Henry[1]); and Sir William D'Avenant, whose activity as a dramatist divides itself so equally between two different epochs in the history of our dramatic literature, that a few remarks concerning him seem demanded both here and in a subsequent place.

Sir William D'Avenant (1606–1669).

His life.

SIR WILLIAM D'AVENANT[2], the author of *Gondibert* and of a large number of plays, of which enough have been preserved to enable us to estimate for ourselves the dramatic powers of a writer extremely popular in his own age and all but forgotten by posterity, was born at Oxford early in 1606. The scandalous rumour as to his birth need not be referred to here, though it is improbable that any offence would thereby be offered to the shade of the vintner's son. Early in life D'Avenant became page to a great Court lady, from whose service he afterwards passed into that of Sir Fulke Greville, Lord Brook, whose literary tastes may have encouraged those of his follower. The death of Lord Brook (by assassination in 1628) left D'Avenant to provide for himself; and in 1629 he produced his first play, *Albovine*. He rapidly rose to reputation as a writer of plays, masks, and other poems; and on the death of Ben Jonson in 1637 was appointed to the Poet-Laureateship, which he held under both Charles I and Charles II. In 1641 he was involved in a royalist conspiracy, and saved himself from arrest by flight to France. During the war he returned to England with

was written by Cowley when a King's Scholar at Westminster School, and has a touch of Plautus or Terence in its plot accordingly; but though it doubtless received subsequent touches, it is a production of considerable dramatic vigour. (Printed in Cowley's *Works* (1711), vol. iii.)

[1] Thomas Killigrew's tragi-comedies, *The Prisoners* and *Claricilla*, were printed in 1641. Henry Killigrew's tragedy of *The Conspiracy* (1638) was republished (1653) under the title of *Pallantus and Eudora*. (*Biographia Dramatica.*)

[2] *The Dramatic Works of Sir William D'Avenant, with Prefatory Memoir and Notes.* (By James Maidment and W. H. Logan.) (5 vols., 1872–4.) Dr. Karl Elze has contributed an essay on D'Avenant to the *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, vol. iv. (1869).

some military stores sent by the Queen; served with such distinction at the siege of Gloucester in 1643, that he there received the honour of knighthood; was after another absence in France employed on a mission from the Queen to the King when at Newcastle in 1646; and was afterwards when engaged on another royal mission arrested and imprisoned in Cowes Castle. Soon after his release he published his poem of *Gondibert* (1651); and then engaged in those attempts at reviving, or keeping alive, the drama which will be briefly adverted to below. He died in 1668 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, where a stone was placed on his tomb with the inscription 'O rare Sr. Will. Davenant.'

Character of his earlier plays.

The career of Charles I's second Poet-Laureate was accordingly a typical one; and the same epithet may be applied to those of his plays which he produced before the Restoration. Devoid of original genius, D'Avenant was as a dramatist sure to conciliate the favour of an age of which, so far as his own class was concerned, he reproduced more faithfully than a greater man could have done, not only the sentiments and the tastes, but the very temper of mind and tone of morality. As a dramatist he may be described as a limb of Fletcher, whom he resembled in his audacious choice of subjects, in his roving rather than soaring flights of fancy, and in his love of warm descriptive colouring. He occasionally reveals some traces of the tenderness and the poetic feeling of his model; but of the humour in which Fletcher abounded D'Avenant seems to me to have little or nothing. He is not incapable of passion; but is in general so unmeasured in expression as to make it difficult to distinguish between his passion and his rant. Burying his characters beneath accumulations of incident, he seems to care for the latter far more than for the former; and though there is a certain progress observable in the series of his plays belonging to this earlier group, there is hardly one of them which seems to possess an intrinsic title to special remembrance.

A brief mention of them will accordingly suffice. The

subject of *Albovine, King of the Lombards* (printed 1629[1]) is the well-known story of Alboin and Rosamund, probably taken by D'Avenant from Bandello. The author revels in the mixture of blood and lust which his plot supplies; and he has apparently introduced some of its most revolting elements himself. His workmanship is coarse; both in the management of his action and in details of treatment and expression the spirit of licence seems to run riot in this play. Nor is much else to be said concerning *The Cruel Brother* (printed 1630), where again we have a King's 'boy' or favourite,—a character which could hardly have been brought on the stage after this fashion in the preceding reign[2]. The plot is a commonplace story of cruel lust; but the scene in which the heroine is put to death on the stage shows that D'Avenant was eager to emulate Webster and Ford in their refinements of the horrible. Into this play is introduced a character, or rather caricature, intended to satirise George Wither, the author of *Abuses Stript and Whipt*[3], whom Jonson also introduced into one of his masks[4]. The figure of Castruccio is a disgraceful libel on an honourable, if not always consistent, man. D'Avenant's third extant play, *The Just Italian* (printed 1630), is equally offensive in the character of its plot, to which occasional poetic touches will fail to reconcile the reader[5].

Albovine (pr. 1629).

The Cruel Brother (pr. 1630).

The Just Italian (pr. 1630).

In *The Platonick Lovers* (printed 1636) D'Avenant essayed the field of high comedy; nor was the subject ill-chosen, or ill-dictated. The author says in the Prologue, referring either to this play or to his mask of *The Temple of Love*, that he

> 'had command
> T' interpret what he scarce doth understand'—

The Platonic Lovers (pr. 1636).

an assertion for which every credit will be given him; but

[1] The version in the folio edition of D'Avenant's *Works* (1673) is an alteration, mainly in the way of abridgment, in prose.

[2] Yet *Albovine* is dedicated to Somerset!

[3] See especially act ii.

[4] *Time Vindicated*, &c. Cf. vol. i. p. 594, note.

[5] This play is compared by the recent editors of D'Avenant to Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* (acted 1624).

to throw gentle ridicule on a fashionable fancy either very silly or very dangerous[1] was in itself an excellent comic idea. But some delicacy of feeling, if not propriety of treatment, was indispensable; and as he neither possessed the one nor attempted the other, D'Avenant has only produced a play which may be said to be not altogether unpleasing and upon the whole healthy in tone. In the scenes between the two Platonic lovers Eurithea and Theander (before Theander's conversion) there is moreover considerable beauty of poetic expression. The comedy of *The Wits* (printed 1636), on the other hand, though of a type less exacting, seems to me to have been greatly overvalued[2]. It certainly contains at least one comic situation of a breadth probably not surpassed by many efforts since Boccaccio; but as a whole it seems to me tedious; and other readers may, like myself, be slow to appreciate the great difference here suggested between

The Wits (pr. 1636).

[1] The whim of so-called 'Platonic love'—as to which one of the characters in D'Avenant's play says with perfect truth, though with a ribald intention, that

> 'they father on him [*i.e.* Plato] a fantastic love
> He never knew, poor gentleman'—

came into fashion at Court about 1634. (See a quotation from Howell's Letters in Maidment and Logan's D'Avenant, ii. 3.) The idea was that of meeting with the intentions, or at least on the terms, of

> 'Lovers of a pure
> Celestial kind, such as some style Platonical,
> A new Court epithet scarce understood;
> But all they woo, Sir, is the spirit, face,
> And heart; therefore their conversation is
> More safe to fame.' (Act i.)

The notion, about which there is nothing in the least original, while its safety admitted of two interpretations, is also referred to in D'Avenant's mask of *The Temple of Love* and in Suckling's *Aglaura* (act ii). Jonson in his *New Inn* (iii. 2), where Lovel defends 'Platonic' love, as usual shows that he knows what he is talking about, though the passage is cold. *The New Inn* was produced in 1629. The 'Platonic love,' fashionable at the Court of King Charles I, was a fancy imported from France, whither it had come from Italy. As to the mediaeval conceptions of 'Platonic love,' and the developement of the combination between these and the ideas of chivalry into the new science of *galanterie*, see St. Marc-Girardin, *Cours de Litt. Dram.*, vol. ii. sect. xxxvi, and vol. iii. sect. xxxvii.

[2] It was revived after the Restoration, and Pepys repeatedly went to see it. (Reprinted in the two earlier editions of Dodsley.)

rural ambition desirous of living on its 'wits' in town, and the claims of town gallantry to a recognition of the art 'how to do it.'

The Unfortunate Lovers (licensed 1638; printed 1643) has two heroines (Amaranta and Arthiopa); and it must be allowed that in the heroic magnanimity of Amaranta there is the germ of a splendid dramatic character; her death, which has a touch of Fletcher when at his best, is genuinely pathetic[1]. *Love and Honour* (licensed 1634; printed 1649), which was revived with extreme success after the Restoration, is more noticeable on account of its plot, which would be very effective were it not overburdened by an excess of ingenuity; indeed in the last act the conflict of generosity and the series of discoveries resemble nothing so much as an interesting game at cards brought to an unexpected issue by a round in which player after player in turn overtrumps his predecessor. The diction is full of similes, but none of them strike me as altogether novel.

The Unfortunate Lovers (1638).

Love and Honour (1634).

The above comprise the dramas known to have been produced by D'Avenant before the Revolution. Of three other plays from his hand we only know that they were all —or probably all—licensed before that date, though they were not printed till the folio of 1673. Whether or not they were all written before the outbreak of the Civil War, it must be allowed that they exhibit a moderation to which D'Avenant's previous plays are strangers, and which was perhaps due to the effect of *Histriomastix*. They possess no other claim to consideration. *News from Plymouth* (licensed 1635) is a bustling comedy of manners, but, notwithstanding the dangerous choice of its scene, no gross example of its class. *The Fair Favourite* (licensed 1638)

News from Plymouth (lic. 1635).

The Fair Favourite (lic. 1638).

[1] 'Am. Go, tell Arthiopa she needs not fear
Her rival now; my bridal bed is in
The earth.
Alt. Oh stay! there may be help!
Am. When you
Come near my grave, if any flower can grow
On such unlucky ground, pray water 't with
A single tear, that 's all I ask. Mercy, Heaven. [*She dies.*'

is a tolerably effective romantic drama, in which a trying situation is treated with a certain delicacy and elevation of sentiment. *The Distresses* (thought to have been the same as *The Spanish Lovers*, licensed 1639) is another drama of intrigue, not very perspicuous in the conduct of the plot, which I should surmise to be taken from some Spanish source.

The Distresses (lic. 1639).

D'Avenant's works.

Of D'Avenant's masks belonging to this period, *The Temple of Love* (of which the subject is the new-fashioned 'cold northerly opinion' of 'Platonic Love') was acted by the Queen and her ladies on Shrove-Tuesday 1634; *The Prince d'Amour* by the members of the Middle Temple, 1635; *Britannia Triumphans* (a loyal mask in honour of the great deeds of 'Britanocles, the glory of the western world,' and containing a passage against the Puritans) on Twelfth-Night 1637, and *Salmacida Spolia* in January 1639, both at Whitehall. The last contains an obvious reference to the rebellious tendencies of the times; the title signifies the victories of royal Wisdom over the devices of Discord.

Academical plays.

A special class of dramatic productions, to which I have adverted when treating of previous periods, continued to flourish in this. The academical drama pursued its tranquil course without interfering with that of the national stage; and if the players would not deal with the scholars who came up from Oxford and Cambridge 'with dorsers full of lamentable tragedies and ridiculous comedies[1],' there was a good market for them without money *in nativo solo*. It may be worth while to dwell for a moment on one or two of these productions.

Holyday's Technogamia (1618).

Technogamia, or The Marriages of the Arts, first printed in 1618, is stated to have been the only dramatic work of its author, Barten Holyday. He was born in 1593, the son of an Oxford tradesman, became a member of Christ Church and a Student of that House, accompanied Sir Francis Stewart to Spain, and was afterwards appointed chaplain to King Charles I and Archdeacon of Oxford.

[1] See Shirley's *The Witty Fair One* (iv. 2).

He died in 1661, leaving behind him a translation of Juvenal and Persius[1].

This comedy, or morality as it might be more appropriately called, is of great length[2] and sufficiently complicated in plot. The leading idea seems to be the confusion which is created by inappropriate *liaisons* between arts and sciences not properly cognate, by their estrangement from those with which they should naturally be united, and by their unhappy flirtations with pseudo-sciences such as Magic and Astrology. In the end 'Polites, a Magistrate' who avows himself the 'Deputie only' of 'our aged and retired Prince *Metaphysicus* (...from whom, as from our Soueraigne, wee hold all wee haue') arranges a series of appropriate marriages. Astronomia (daughter to Physica) is united to Geographus; while her other lover Geometres is assigned to Arithmetica, who trusts 'we two shall be alwaies euen.' Poeta, who throughout the play has distinguished himself by his capacity for getting into scrapes and has entertained a foolish passion for Astronomia, is married to his proper mate Historia, promising that his love shall more inseparably follow her 'then the *Hexameter* the *Pentameter;* or the *Adonicke* the *Sapphicke.*' The rest are likewise provided for, Logicus being left unmarried, to his own content: 'I care not for marrying; I see no good Foundation for any such Relation.' Magus and Astrologia are bidden 'depart the Common-Wealth for euer,' while Medicus and Causidicus are on promise of amendment pardoned their corrupt practices.

Doubtless much curious illustration could be derived from this play for the history of studies in the University, before whose members it was acted at Shrove-tide by students of Christ Church. The author in his Epilogue excuses himself for the farcical elements he has introduced into his comedy

[1] Morley, *First Sketch*, p. 540. Prof. Morley dates the first edition of *Technogamia* 1630; but I possess a copy of the edition of 1618.

[2] Indeed it seems to have acquired the reputation of being the longest play in the English language. But I should doubt its title to this pre-eminence, even before the publication of Mr. Swinburne's *Bothwell.*

'to satisfie the Weake
Shee-Academickes,'—

who do not in those days appear to have contented themselves in academic spectacles with forming a principal part of them. Several of the personified arts and sciences are provided with servants—Phantastes is the servant of Geographus; Melancholico is Poeta's man; Choler acts as usher under the schoolmaster Grammaticus, and Phlegmatico, who is inordinately addicted to tobacco[1], is the attendant of Logicus, while Sanguis very appropriately waits upon Mediçus[2]. Physiognomus and Cheiromantes are two fortune-tellers who talk gipsy cant and add to the vivacity of the action, which is at times more striking than its perspicuity. For the special purpose already adverted to, this odd production might possibly merit a more careful study and comment than most readers will care to bestow upon it. The author was evidently a good scholar, a shrewd critic, and a fair wit[3].

While on the subject of academical plays, I may mention

[1] See his song, 'Tobacco's a Musician
And in a Pipe delighteth,' &c.
(ii. 3). The lyrics in this play are remarkably lively.

[2] The costume of Sanguis is 'a red suite; on the brest whereof was a man with his nose bleeding; on the backe, one let bloud in the arme; in a red hat, red band, stockings, red pumps,' &c. (i. 9; the costumes are very minutely described in this play, particular attention being throughout given to the colour of the 'pumps'). Elsewhere Polites eulogises Sanguis as 'an honest servant, and more faithfull to the whole Bodie of the Common-wealth, than any one Corrupt Member' (v. 6). It may perhaps be noted that Harvey's discovery had been first brought forward three years before the publication of *Technogamia*.

[3] See *e. g.* Polites' remarks on the defects of 'your common geographers' (iv. 1); Historia's irreverent criticism of 'one *Lucretius*, a Romane Gentleman ... that fell in love with *Physica*, shee from whom *Physica* the mother of *Astronomia* deriues now both her name and linage, which Gentleman, in the passion of his loue, writ books in the praise of her beauty; but what wrinkle-fac'd Verses they are, let the present age judge; and if her beautie was like his lines, sure she was past her three-score, when hee fell in loue with her; but alas, there was neuer any of that family that euer came neere the *Historias* for beauty' (iv. 2); Magus' conjecture, on Poeta's reciting some English hexameter and pentameter verses when the worse for wine, that 'in some such humour this kind of Verses was first made amongst vs' (iii. 6); and Grammaticus' pun against law-cases, which 'are Datiue cases to the Lawyers; but Ablatiue to the Clients' (iv. 6).

two famous comedies of this description, which though written in Latin, deserve exceptionally to be noticed. The author of the earlier of these, *Ignoramus*[1], was GEORGE RUGGLE, who, born in 1575 at Lavenham in Suffolk, was successively a member of three Cambridge colleges, finally obtaining a fellowship at Clare Hall in 1598. His reputation for learning is described as very great; but his title to fame rests on a very unique exemplification of his accomplishments. About the beginning of the year 1611, a dispute arose at Cambridge on the singular question whether the Mayor of the Town or the Vice-Chancellor of the University was entitled to precedence, and when the decision of the Privy Council had been duly given in favour of the Vice-Chancellor, it became necessary for the attendants of that dignitary to enforce his rights against the recalcitrant Mayor. One Brakyn a common lawyer, at that time Recorder of Cambridge, had taken an active part in this dispute on the side of the town; and he it was whom, for the delectation of King James on an expected royal visit to Cambridge, the ingenious Mr. Ruggle resolved to make the hero of a Latin comedy.

George Ruggle's Ignoramus (1615).

The royal visit actually took place in March 1615, when among several dramatic entertainments offered to the King and Charles Prince of Wales, *Ignoramus* was acted in Trinity College hall (St. John's presented a Latin comedy by Cecill, called *Æmilia*, the chief part in which consisted of a foolish tutor of physic; Trinity, an English comedy by Tomkis, called *Albumazar*[2], besides a Latin pastoral by Brookes, *Melanthe;* and King's an English comedy by Phineas Fletcher, called *The Piscatory*). Its success was so great that it was repeated with a new prologue and other additions on a second royal visit in May; and thus its reputation

[1] Of the numerous editions of this play—the earliest bears the date of 1630—that edited by J. S. Hawkins (1787), with a Memoir, Glossary, and extraordinary apparatus of commentaries, will be found to satisfy all demands. I have to thank Mr. Chancellor Christie for kindly lending it me out of his delightful library.

[2] *Vide infra.*

was established, and the lawyers in vain attempted to extinguish it by retorts. It was translated into English by R. Codrington in 1662, and again in 1678 by Ravenscroft, under the title of *The English Lawyer,* and as such performed at the Theatre Royal in London. It was in 1730 and 1747 acted by the Westminster Scholars, as well as at Merchant Taylors' and Bury St. Edmunds' Schools in 1763 and 1731,—and very likely these data fail to exhaust the history of its career. Its author, who produced another Latin comedy called *Loiola* (printed 1648), which was likewise acted before King James, remained a fellow of Clare Hall till 1620, and seems to have died two years afterwards.

The comedy of *Ignoramus* is an imitation of the Italian comedy of *La Trappolaria* by G. Porta, which in its turn was based upon the *Pseudolus* of Plautus, though mixed with modern elements after the fashion of the Italian comedy of this period[1]. But the originality of Ruggle's play consists in the substitution for the characters of a captain and his servants of the lawyer and his clerks; and in these characters, notably of course in that of Ignoramus himself, lay at once the personal satire and the fun of the play. Though the whole of it seems written with much vivacity—partly in Plautine iambics, party in a medley of Latin and English prose—the attention of the reader will concentrate itself on the main character. Ignoramus is designed as a satire on the barbarous ignorance and equally barbarous phraseology of a pettifogger who can talk neither Latin, nor French, nor good King's English, but only a vile professional jargon of his own, which justifies an attempt in the course of the play to exorcise him as possessed by evil spirits. He hates the University and all its ways[2], and is intended as a living example of barbarous

[1] Cf. Klein, v. 663.

[2] 'Sunt magni idiotae, et clerici nihilorum, isti Universitantes: miror quomodo spendisti tuum tempus inter eos.' *Mus.:* 'Ut plurimum versatus sum in *Logica.*' *Igr.* '*Logica?* Quæ villa, quod burgum est *Logica?*' *Mus.:* 'Est una artium liberalium.' *Igr.* 'Liberalium? Sic putabam. In nomine Dei, stude artes parcas et lucrosas: non est mundus pro artibus liberalibus jam.'

Philistinism. His speech is accordingly made up of the terms of his profession, which he introduces with extraordinary promptitude to garnish his horrible Latin; 'lingua mea,' he says, 'vadit ad verba accustomata: Puto me placitare jam[1].' It must however be added that the satire of the character of Ignoramus is not confined to such comparatively harmless peculiarities of his profession as a barbarous phraseology; for his principles are on a level with his style of speech, and his great desire is 'capere in manum' whomsoever he can, so that a poetic justice is exercised upon him by his being nearly 'murderatus,' before in the epilogue he finally takes his departure 'bootatus et spurratus' for London.

Abraham Cowley's Naufragium Joculare (1638).

The famous *Naufragium Joculare* of Abraham Cowley (whose contributions to English dramatic literature will be briefly noticed below) is a hardly less diverting specimen of the same kind of production. Acted at Trinity in 1638, it obtained celebrity by the boisterous fun of its first act (suggested by an earlier play[2]), in which a drunken company are deluded into the belief that they are 'suffering shipwreck, till their request to be led 'in inferiora navis' is very summarily complied with. The Latinity of this amusing comedy ('Scena Dunkerka') is not always strictly classical; but it is full of quotations which bespeak the learning as well as the ready wit of its youthful author, and shows that he and his contemporaries at Cambridge well understood the *ars jocandi*, of which Æmylio shows himself so accomplished a professor[3].

T. Tomkis' Albumazar (1614?).

The English play of *Albumazar the Astronomer*, by THOMAS TOMKIS, which as already observed was acted before King James on the same occasion as *Ignoramus*, has

[1] These terms Ruggle derived from various sources, among others from a work which acquired a most signal notoriety in the political history of this reign—Cowell's *Interpreter* (suppressed by proclamation in 1610).

[2] *viz.* Thomas Heywood's *The English Traveller* (cf. *ante*, p. 117 note).

[3] See act iii. sc. 3. The comedy is printed in vol. iii of the 3 vol. edition of Cowley's *Works* (1711).—An account of another Cambridge Latin play, Philip Stubbe's *Fraus Honesta* (1616), will be found in Masson's *Life of Milton*, i. 187.

likewise come down to us[1]. Of its author nothing further is known, but the play seems to have enjoyed a certain reputation down to the time of the Restoration, when (in 1668) it was produced with a prologue by Dryden (in which he quite erroneously declares Jonson's *Alchemist* to have been founded on Tomkis' play), and even to that of Garrick, who revived it twice (in 1747 and in 1773) at Drury Lane[2]. Dryden's mistake may in this instance not have been the result of his own recklessness; for it appears that this play was by some assigned to the year 1603 and attributed to Shakspere[3]. *Albumazar* was in truth, though Trinity College claimed it as of its own 'invention' as well as 'action,' an imitation of an Italian comedy by Porta[4],—and so close an imitation, even in its most amusing scene (iii. 7), as to have no claims to originality. It is academical in its lengthiness, but written with considerable fluency and occasional felicity of expression[5].

J. Fisher's Fuimus Troes (pr. 1633).

The rhetorical drama of *Fuimus Troes. The True Troianes* (printed 1633[6]) may likewise be noted in passing among the productions of the Academical Muse. Its author, Dr. JASPER FISHER, was successively a member of Magdalen Hall, and Divinity or Philosophy Reader of Magdalen College, Oxford, at the latter of which the play was publicly performed by the students. It treats of Caesar's two invasions of Britain, and is to a large extent based on Geoffrey of Monmouth. The style of this composition

[1] It is printed in the new edition of Dodsley's *Old Plays*, vol. xi, and in *The Ancient British Drama*, vol. ii.

[2] On the latter occasion with some immaterial alterations of his own. See Geneste, v. 394.

[3] See the late Mr. Christie's (Globe) edition of Dryden's *Poetical Works*, p. 401.

[4] *viz. L'Astrologo*, for an account of which see Klein, v. 621 *seqq.*

[5] Albumazar's introductory lecture on the Art of Cheating is doubtless taken from its counterpart in the Italian play; but the following is good, whether original or not:

'*Har.* And yet he steals; one author from another.
This poet is that poet's plagiary,
And he a third's, till they all end in Homer.
Alb. And Homer filch'd all from an Egyptian priestess.
The world's a theatre of theft.' (i. 1.)

[6] See Dodsley's *Old Plays* (1827), vol. vii.

is both fluent and florid; and the classical learning of the Briton kings and princes is not less astonishing than are the metaphysical and prophetical accomplishments of the Druids. The ghosts of Brennus and Camillus are brought on by Mercury for induction and epilogue; and the meaning of the author seems to be that Romans and Britons by their deeds equally justified their Trojan descent. The play is full of lyrics, one of which is oddly enough in the Scottish dialect.

Mask-writers of the reigns of James I,

In conclusion, there are but few among the writers of masks, pageants, and similar entertainments during the reigns of James I and Charles I whose remains appear to entitle them to specific mention in a sketch of English dramatic literature. Ben Jonson held an undisputed pre-eminence among the poets who devoted part of their energies to this class of productions; during his absence in Scotland a friendly pen could gratify him by the news 'that the late mask' composed by some writer unknown to us 'was not so approved of by the King, as in former times, and that his absence was regretted[1].' His quarrel with Inigo Jones for a time interfered with his activity in this direction, and sickness must likewise have stayed his hand; but though he had enemies, he had no rival. Among the other dramatists whose productions have been surveyed in the preceding chapters, Daniel, Chapman, Marston, and Beaumont have been mentioned as authors of entertainments designed for the Court and nobility; while Dekker, Middleton, and old Anthony Munday were active in doing similar service to their patrons of the City, in the reign of James I[2]. Of writers unknown as dramatists, one

[1] Drummond to Jonson, in a letter cited from Gifford by Collier, i. 417.

[2] As Jonson sneered at Munday, and Marston (see *The Insatiate Countess*, act ii *ad in.*) at City shows in general, so Glapthorne has a rather happy sarcasm against the City poets of his day (see *Wit in a Constable*, i. 1):

> 'perchance
> You may arrive to be the City Poet,
> And send the little moisture of your brain
> To grace a Lord Mayor's festival with shows,
> Alluding to his trade, or to the company
> Of which he 's free.'

of the most successful composers of masks seems to have been THOMAS CAMPION, who died in 1623, and was both a poet and a musician of repute. He published works on the theory of both the arts which (in addition to the science of medicine) he cultivated; and the masks preserved from his hand show him to have been a graceful lyrical poet, free in the choice of his metres and elegant in execution[1]. ROBERT WHITE, who produced in 1617 a mask, performed before the Queen at Deptford by a college of young ladies, on the appropriate subject of *Cupid's Banishment*[2], and the unknown author of *The Mask of Flowers*[3], acted in 1614 by gentlemen of Gray's Inn at Whitehall on the occasion of Somerset's marriage, may be likewise mentioned in passing.

and Charles I.

Charles I appears to have begun with a less lavish expenditure upon such matters than his father, who had spent more than £4000 on masks in the first seven years of his reign[4]. But the taste was by no means extinct as yet, and continued to be met by the efforts of Ben Jonson, Shirley, THOMAS CAREW (whose *Coelum Britannicum* was performed, with music by Henry Lawes, in 1634[5]), and others. AURELIAN TOWNSHEND is mentioned as the author of two masks, *Albion's Triumph* and *Tempe Restored*, in 1632[6]; and in the next year the expenditure on masks may have contributed, together with the Queen's

[1] See his *Mask at Lord Hayes' Marriage* (1607) in Nichols' *Progresses &c. of James I*, ii. 105 *seqq.*; his *Entertainment of the Queen at Caversham House* (1613), *ib.* 630 *seqq.*; and his *Mask at the Earl of Somerset's Marriage* (1613), *ib.* 707 *seqq.* The last of these has an anti-mask; in general they are more pleasing in execution than original in invention.—For a notice of Campion see *ib.* 104, note; and cf. ii. 553. His *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602), designed to show the metrical capabilities of the English language and to explode 'the childish titilation of riming,' appear to have been the cause of Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme* (cf. *ante*, p. 141, note 2; where for *Sidney* read *Campion*).

[2] Nichols, *u.s.*, iii. 283 *seqq.*

[3] *Ib.* ii. 735. The anti-mask is the trial of a challenge sent from Silenus to Kawasha, 'that Wine is more woorthie than Tobacco, and cheereth man's spirit more, the same to be tried at two severall weapons, Song and Dance.'

[4] Collier, i. 363.

[5] See Masson's *Life of Milton*, i. 550; Dibdin, *History of the Stage*, iv. 131. Carew (1589–1639) is one of the lighter poets of the Fantastic School.

[6] Collier, ii. 37.

performance in a pastoral, to rouse the ire of the Puritan censor of the stage[1]. But Prynne's invectives produced no immediate result so far as masks were concerned[2], and their decline seemed more likely to be the consequence of internal inanition than of external attacks. Shirley, whose literary judgment was keen, comments vigorously on the decay of the mask from a literary point of view[3]; and it is unnecessary to speculate how far the weakness of productivity in this direction may have been due to secondary causes, such as the growing financial difficulties of the King. These perhaps more immediately affected the regular stage than the amusements of the Court; during the years preceding the outbreak of the troubles, its festivities, for which William D'Avenant[4] seems to have become the principal poetical purveyor, continued; SIR ASTON COKAIN (who is not known to have produced any plays before the Restoration) was author of at least one slight mask in this reign[5];

[1] *Cf. infra.*

[2] At Lincoln's Inn (see dedication to *Histriomastix*) the practice of masks at Christmas had been discontinued before the publication of Prynne's diatribe. The other Inns of Court however kept up the practice, especially the Middle Temple, where the old custom of electing a 'Prince d'Amour' to preside over the Christmas revels prevailed both in James' and in Charles' reign. (Maidment and Logan's Introduction to D'Avenant's mask of that name.)

[3] The passage is worth quoting as giving a very faithful account of the mask, when it is unredeemed by poetic genius:

> 'Things go not now
> By learning; I have read, 'tis but to bring
> Some pretty impossibilities, for anti-masks,
> A little sense and wit disposed with thrift,
> With here and there monsters to make them laugh
> For the grand business, to have Mercury
> Or Venus' dandiprat, to usher in
> Some of the gods, that are good fellows, dancing,
> Or goddesses; and now and then a song,
> To fill a gap:—a thousand crowns, perhaps,
> For him that made it, and there's all the wit.'
>
> *The Royal Master*, ii. 1.

The ordinary mask-writer was certainly little anxious to secure much beyond the 'mere entertainment' which Sarpego in Chapman's *Gentleman Usher* (act iii) seeks to distinguish from the 'Morality' of a mask.

[4] See *ante*, p. 364, and cf. Collier, ii. 73, 80, 85.

[5] The *Mask presented at Brethie* in Derbyshire on Twelfth Night, 1639, before Philip Earl of Chesterfield. (Printed in Cokain's *Dramatic Works*, 1874.)

but no further mention need have been made of the productions of mask-writers in this period, had it not been for two endeavours, widely different in their literary significance, but both designed to make this poetic species serve higher purposes than the amusement of an hour or the glorification of an occasion. Over one of these attempts I may rapidly pass; the other may seem strangely out of place in this connexion, but a few remarks on it, and on the only other dramatic production of its author, may not unfittingly conclude this survey of our dramatic literature up to the time of the great Puritan Revolution.

T. Nabbes' Microcosmus (pr. 1637).

One of the most elaborate of the masks of this period, and so far as is known the first ever exhibited on a public stage[1], is THOMAS NABBES' *Microcosmus*[2] (printed 1637). Though furnished forth with a multitude of *dramatis personae* befitting its ambitious title, including the Four Elements, the Four Complexions, and the Five Senses, this 'moral mask' is in reality only one more version of the old contention between Sensuality and virtuous Love. The hero Physander, representing the 'little world' of man[3], is guided through conflict and error to ultimate reunion with his heavenly wife, Bellanima, who 'signifies the soul.' The author of this mask appears to have composed dramatic works of nearly every species[4].

This production is not redeemed from commonplace by a touch in the scheme recalling the plot of *Comus*. Two sons of the Earl (acted by the boys themselves) appear in the anti-mask, having fallen into the rude hands of Satyrs. 'What would you have?' the Lar Familiaris of the house asks them.

'*1st Boy.* I would go to my father.
2nd Boy. And I unto my mother.
Lar. Who is your father?
1st Boy. The ever-honour'd Earl of Chesterfield,' &c.

[1] According to Malone (quoted in Dodsley) 'a mask for dancers of the ropes' was allowed at the Fortune Theatre in 1624; but this (as there observed) was probably merely dumb show and dancing.

[2] Printed in Dodsley (1827), vol. ix.

[3] 'The perfect analogy between the world and man,' here indicated, was no novel idea with writers of this species of production. See the explanatory address to the Reader, prefixed to Ford and Dekker's *Sun's Darling*; and cf. Dyce's note *ad loc.*, where Nabbes' mask is said to be 'written with better effect, and on a plan far more ingeniously constructed,' than Ford and Dekker's.

[4] For an account of some of his plays, see Geneste, x. 57 *seqq.*

In the isolated attempt of Nabbes there was nothing either new or significant; but it is not by way of contrast with his respectable endeavour to combine morality and masquerade that I have now to speak of a work by one of the greatest of our poets—the mask by which the name of Milton connects itself, as it were accidentally, with the half-forgotten names which have filled the preceding pages.

John Milton (1608–1674).

In his twenty-fifth year—he was born in 1608—Milton had completed his University career. He left Cambridge, where he had led a blameless life, after having by unceasing application acquired a store of learning sufficient to make even a laborious student of modern days blush. Not only was he beyond a doubt one of the most accomplished Latinists of the University; not only had he attained to a competent knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, and gone through the inevitable courses of Logic and Philosophy; but in modern literature, English, Latin, French, and Italian, he had become master of various sources which were afterwards, though not at all in the same degree, to feed by their contributions the mighty stream of his creative genius.

His life in the period 1632–1638.

This course of studies he continued and developed in the rural retirement of his father's home at Horton in Buckinghamshire, where he spent the years from 1632 to 1638. It can hardly be doubted that this retirement had its cause in the change which had gradually come over his mind with reference to his original intention of taking Orders in the Church of England. To enquire into the probable causes of this change would lead me too far from my present purpose; it will suffice to remember the progress in the Church during the first years of the new reign of tendencies finding their expression in Laud's elevation to the Primacy in 1633—the year after that in which Milton quitted Cambridge[1]. His thoughts were therefore now turned towards a literary life; and to this purpose he henceforth remained devoted, until a change in public affairs of which he could never have dreamt brought him for a short space of time into a participation in the conduct of them. To the student at Horton

[1] See chap. v of Mr. Masson's *Life of Milton*.

the literary world of the neighbouring capital could offer few attractions. Here Ben Jonson still reigned supreme; and Milton was ready to acknowledge him as the leader of what still remained the most popular branch of literature—the dramatic[1]. But the haunts of the veteran and his 'sons' were not such as a youth of Milton's disposition was likely to frequent; his visits to London were rare, and if he was brought into personal contact with dramatic writers, it may have been through the two musicians William and Henry Lawes, with the latter of whom he was on terms of friendship. Under the occasional influence of such acquaintances and of others, chiefly scientific men[2], but generally among his Greek, Latin, Italian, and English books, and amidst the surroundings of rural scenery, Milton spent the years in which he composed the group of works to which *Comus* and its predecessor *Arcades* belong.

His Arcades (probably 1634).

The *Arcades* was probably produced in the same year, 1634, as its more famous successor, and is interesting to us as a preliminary attempt in the same direction. It was probably written at the instigation of Henry Lawes, who composed the music for its performance at Harefield House, as part of an entertainment presented to the Dowager Countess of Derby, a daughter of Sir John Spencer of Althorpe, and the Amarillis of Spenser's *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*. Her grandchildren performed this mask, which is slight in construction, and differs little from the Jonsonian type[3], except by the graceful flow of its verse and the eloquence of the passage in praise of Music,—the art to which the place of honour is given at the conclusion of both *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*,—the art which was

[1] See the well-known parallel passages in the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso*, probably written before *Comus*.

[2] Masson, *u. s.*, p. 529. He visited London to take lessons in music and mathematics.—Mr. Masson suggests, p. 551, that Milton may have taken an interest in the performance of Shirley's mask of *The Triumph of Peace* (Feb. 1634) as a 'musical opportunity,' especially as his brother Christopher was then a student of the Inner Temple.

[3] Cf. especially Jonson's *Part of the King's Entertainment* (1603), where, to Gifford's righteous indignation, Warton observed that 'the Genius speaks somewhat in Milton's manner.'

the joy of Milton's youth and was to be one of the consolations of his blind old age.

His Comus (1634).

But the *Arcades* was only a brief essay in a field wherein Milton, doubtless soon afterwards, produced a masterpiece. *Comus* was written, doubtless also at the invitation of Lawes (who composed the music and undertook the general management[1]), for performance at Ludlow Castle in Shropshire, the official residence of the Earl of Bridgewater (the stepson of the lady honoured in the *Arcades*) as Lord President of Wales. He had rather tardily arrived at Ludlow late in 1633, and the festivities on the occasion continued over the greater part of the following year. In this connexion the entertainment devised by Milton and his friend was produced on Michaelmas-night, September 29th, 1634. The principal parts were performed by the Earl's sons and daughter, who represented the two Brothers and the Lady of the Mask; Lawes filled the part of the Attendant Spirit; the names of the remaining performers have not been preserved.

It is well known that a story existed at a comparatively late date[2] to the effect that this mask—which neither in the first nor in the second edition of Milton's poems bore its distinctive title of *Comus*—was founded on a real incident. It was said that the two brothers and their sister, being on their way to Ludlow from the house of some relatives in Herefordshire, were benighted in Haywood Forest; and that this adventure, having been narrated by Lawes to Milton, was used by him as the foundation of his plot—if plot it can be called.

After what has been observed in previous passages of this book[3] on the nature of the species to which Milton's *Comus* belongs, it may seem unnecessary to point out why the severest strictures which have been passed on this production—those of Dr. Johnson in his *Life of Milton*—miss the mark. He criticises the action of *Comus* as improbable

[1] Masson, *u. s.*, p. 572.

[2] Mr. Masson (p. 573) says that Oldys (who lived about a century afterwards) is the earliest known authority for this 'legend.'

[3] Vol. i. pp. 82, 587.

even in those parts in which it is merely human. What the poet undertakes to present is, however, not the semblance of a real action, but the allegorical reproduction of a thought already presumed to be uppermost in the minds of a particular audience. The mask is of its nature an occasional piece, and its literary value is quite independent of its dramatic effectiveness[1]. Glaring improbabilities it may as a matter of good taste be advisable to avoid; but the improbability which Johnson half-contemptuously stigmatises in *Comus* will hardly be admitted to fall under the above category. So, again, when he reprehends as 'contrary to the nature of dramatic representation' the circumstance that 'the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the Attendant Spirit is addressed to the audience,' he forgets that the laws, internal as well as external, of dramatic representation are here altogether out of question. His whole commentary on his text, that 'as a drama *Comus* is deficient,' proceeds on a false assumption. The mask depends for its effect on a combination of poetic, decorative, and musical elements; and the danger lies in the likelihood of the first being overpowered by the others. But the effect of the mask is intended to suit its own occasion; it is an effect which in performance cannot be reproduced at will; as a permanent work therefore *Comus*, or any other mask, is to be judged by qualities quite independent of its merits or demerits as an occasional dramatic spectacle.

Milton by the power of his genius, which—perhaps unconsciously—carried him far beyond the occasion of his task, elevated a species of composition usually employed as a mere vehicle of compliment to the level of a poetic tribute, not to an individual, but to Virtue itself. To Lawes he may have been indebted for the felicitous basis on which he reared a superstructure of incomparable nobility. It cannot be doubted that he was further indebted to other—

[1] *Comus*, *e.g.*, is quite unsuitable for performance on the stage, though it has frequently made its appearance there. It was first acted at Drury Lane in 1738, with musical accompaniments by Dr. Arne, and has since been from time to time revived, notably by Mr. Macready. My own experience of a more recent revival leads me to think such attempts mistakes.

literary—sources for the choice of the main figures and the use of some of the incidents which support the slight fable of his poem[1]. In details of expression he here, as elsewhere, wove many flowers derived from other poets into the rich robe of his poetic diction[2]. But in both conception and execution the poem remains, in the highest sense of the word, original. The concluding lines of the Spirit's epilogue[3]—lines which it is worth remembering that Milton inscribed as his motto in the album of an Italian admirer—express in brief the main idea of *Comus*. The sublimity of Milton's genius—the quality which, in the literature of his own country at all events, so pre-eminently distinguishes him as a poet—shines forth with marvellous fulness in this work of his youth. The execution falls but little short of the conception. The lyric portions, although perhaps Macaulay goes too far in describing them as completely overshadowing the dramatic, are among the poet's noblest verse; and the dialogue, though its versification is less stately and its diction less ample than that of *Paradise Lost*, which indeed almost precludes dramatic declamation, rises at the climax of the moral interest—in the argument between Comus and the Lady—to almost matchless beauty[4]. Indeed there may be those who cannot suppress a wish that Milton had always adhered to this earlier and easier treatment of his favourite metre—easier I mean to hands

[1] It has already been pointed out (vol. i. p. 209) that Milton, who was a reader of Peele, was indebted to *The Old Wives' Tale* for the suggestion of the figures which in his hands became Comus, the Lady, her Brothers, and the Attendant Spirit. Instead of (as it might otherwise seem natural for him to have done) taking directly from the myth of Circe the idea of the central figure of the magician and the associations surrounding it, he may have used a Latin poem *Comus* (by Puteanus of Louvain) republished at Oxford in this very year 1634. He may have been acquainted with Ben Jonson's mask of *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1619), in which Comus is one of the characters. And beyond all doubt he had been a reader of Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* (revived at Court and at the theatres in 1633–4). Cf. vol. i. p. 593, note; vol. ii. p. 172; and see Masson, *u. s.*, p. 586.

[2] For instances I may refer the reader to the notes on *Comus* in Mr. R. C. Browne's edition of Milton's *English Poems* (Clarendon Press Series, 1870).

[3] 'Mortals, that would follow me,' &c.

[4] Dr. Johnson, forgetting that the dialogue here represents as it were the summary of the case of Virtue against Vice before the tribunal of humanity, desiderates 'a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies.'

under which language passed into combinations 'musical, as is Apollo's lute.'

Finally, it should be pointed out that it is impossible not to recognise in *Comus* a twofold allegory. If in the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso* the poet still holds the balance between the two temperaments and tendencies of mind which lay at the root of the division of the nation, and describes the nobler aspects of either, while already indicating his preference for the one,—in *Comus* we have an unmistakeable allegory of the conflict between the two. The Revel-god is therefore not only the representative of Incontinence; he is also a representative of those whom the poet actually regarded as the living votaries of the view of life which he abhorred. While *Comus* never descends from the height of poetic allegory to the lower level of satire, such as even *Lycidas* cannot be said wholly to avoid, yet its secondary intention seems to me too clearly marked to be capable of being disputed by any candid reader.

His dramatic designs.

Such is the attitude which in this immortal mask the great poet of the Revolution epoch takes up towards the age from which as yet he 'dwelt apart,' and which mirrored itself only too faithfully in so much of its dramatic literature. Independently of the character of his own poetic gifts, it was hardly possible that Milton should have connected himself directly with the drama in these the days of its gradual, but certain, moral as well as literary decay. His fertile intellect indeed turned on more than one occasion to thoughts of the dramatic form of composition. But to such thoughts he was not inspired by any dramatic examples he may occasionally have witnessed on the London stage, or by the remembrance of the academical comedies which he had hissed in his student-days at Cambridge[1]. His design of treating the subject of *Paradise Lost* in the form of a mystery may be passed by[2];

[1] See the passage from the *Apology for Smectymnuus* quoted in Masson, p. 190.

[2] As to Milton's several drafts of this subject 'as meditated for dramatic treatment' see Mr. Masson's new edition of Milton's *Poetical Works*, vol. i. p. 45.

the other dramatic projects he formed were doubtless intended to be executed on the model of the ancient classical drama. He is stated to have left behind him a list of not less than one-hundred-and-two dramatic subjects, sixty of which were Scriptural, thirty-three from British, and five from Scottish history[1]. But on these schemes it is unnecessary to dwell; for there remains to us one completed work by which Milton's name directly connects itself with our dramatic literature. Of this, though belonging in date to a later period, I may here say a word in conclusion, before asking the reader to return with me to an age of our national life and literature in which the struggle reviewed by the author of *Samson Agonistes* was only preparing itself.

His Samson Agonistes (pr. 1677).

Milton's mask of *Comus* reflects the moral indignation with which the representative of Puritanism under its loftiest aspect, when its hopes were high and its strength was on the eve of self-assertion, regarded the representatives of moral and social decay. The only poem, on the other hand, to which he gave a regular dramatic form was the fruit of different times and different conditions, though the spirit of the writer remained the same. *Samson Agonistes*, printed in the same year as *Paradise Regained* (1667), is the utterance of the faithful upholder of an oppressed and persecuted cause; but it is no cry of doubt or despair. Milton had not suffered outwardly from the powers of the Restoration; the restraint to which he had been subjected had been nominal only; yet he was surrounded by dangers of no imaginary character, when the cause to which he had consecrated the labours of his manhood had been trampled in the dust, while many of its champions had been led to death or driven into exile, and the cause itself had become a by-word in the mouths of 'antics, mummers, mimics,' as well as in the high places

[1] See Masson's edition, vol. i. p. 44. Among the Scotch subjects was *Macbeth*. '"Milton's intention,' according to Steevens, whose note I quote from Mr. Furness' edition of *Macbeth*, p. 299, 'was to have begun with the arrival of Malcolm at Macduff's castle. "The matter of Duncan," says he, "may be expressed by the appearing of his ghost."'

of Church and State. For himself there remained nothing to hope, and but little to fear—for his work had been done, and death 'who sets all free' must speedily pay 'his ransom now and full discharge' from the moral bondage of life in a servile age and self-dishonoured nation. But for the cause which to him was that of truth and virtue as well as of his country, hope was not dead in his breast—could not be dead till life itself was extinct, as the light had long been quenched in his eyes amid 'the blaze of noon' around him.

Such was the spirit in which the blind poet composed this tragedy of *Samson Agonistes*, the historical and biographical interest of which is therefore extremely great. And to this circumstance is doubtless to be attributed the favour, it might perhaps be said the reverence, with which this poem has been regarded by posterity. For it is impossible to contemplate without sympathy the last utterance of so lofty a political and religious faith, or without emotion the blind poet's creation of the blind hero. On passages such as that in which a fiery indignation brands with lofty wrath

> 'nations grown corrupt
> And by their vices brought to servitude,'

who

> 'love bondage more than liberty,
> Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty,'—

or that in which, in strains of the deepest pathos and of the most thrilling directness, the blind Samson laments his last and least endurable loss—the loss of sight[1]—it is impossible to dwell without feelings of admiration and awe. Nor are other touches of a different character wanting to remind the reader, how much Milton has revealed in this poem of the bitter as well as of the tragic experiences of his life[2].

From a purely literary point of view the tragedy of

[1] 'O first created beam, and thou great Word,' &c.

[2] I refer to the passage on 'wedlock-treachery,' and the whole tone of the scene between Samson and Dalila, without going the length of Phillips in supposing Milton to have in Samson's rejection of Dalila intended a direct personal reminiscence. Cf. Masson's *Life of Milton*, vol. iii. p. 441.

Samson Agonistes, which, as the Preface needlessly states, was 'never intended to the stage,' cannot be said to possess merits commensurate with its historical and biographical value. That it has escaped representation under conditions wholly uncongenial to it, may be due not only to the sacred character of the source of the subject, but also to the circumstance that by composing music to it as an oratorio Handel has removed it for ever from possible contact with the play-house. Into a criticism of Milton's rather perfunctory remarks *on that sort of dramatic poem which is called Tragedy* it seems unnecessary to enter; the array of examples by which he supports the dignity of tragedy reminds one of the old defences of the drama in the Elisabethan tracts; and the appeal to the examples of Greek and Italian tragedy was merely a necessary preface to the method followed in the drama itself. *Samson Agonistes* is not divided into acts and scenes; the catastrophe is announced by a Messenger; and a Chorus accompanies with reflexions and lyrical outbursts the developement of the action, which at first proceeds rather slowly. The character of Samson is finely and consistently conceived, and there is dramatic life in the shifting wiles of Dalila.

Passages of this poem, which in details as well as in the whole nature of its construction exhibits Milton's familiarity with Greek tragedy, possess all the condensed vigour and lofty enthusiasm of their author's genius; elsewhere he equally exhibits his favourite mannerisms, his classical twists of construction, and his fondness for sesquipedalian words[1]. The metre of the lyrical passages is, as he himself says, 'of all sorts;' and though these passages are in part full of exquisite rhythmical beauty, the licence of making the use of rhyme occasional only, and the doubtful felicity of some of the rhymes themselves, tend to disturb the general harmony of the effect. In the narrative of the Messenger (the force of which is heightened by his previous broken tidings) the epical power of Milton finds an opportunity for full display.

[1] See *e.g.* the passage beginning 'My griefs not only pain me.'

Review of the period from Shakspere to the Civil War.

In literary, as in all other, history it is generally difficult to say where growth passes into decline, and where in the midst of exuberant life the first signs announce themselves of the beginning of the end. Shakspere is justly regarded as the Sophocles, and something more than the Sophocles, of the English drama; but in the case neither of the Greek nor of the English poet must it be forgotten that no one man's works can be viewed as the complete expression of even a single side of a nation's literary life in any given age. The death of Sophocles, the representative of the very flower of the Attic drama, was actually preceded by that of Euripides, the representative of incipient decay; and Phaedra had sobbed forth her sinful sorrows to the accompaniment of Carian flutings a generation before the *Œdipus Coloneus* once more recalled to the Athenians the lofty dignity of Sophoclean tragedy. While Shakspere was still in the fulness of his maturity, English comedy in the hands of Jonson, and English tragedy in those of Beaumont and Fletcher, had already begun to pass into what may be called their transnormal period. The course of individual genius sways and at times directs that of a whole literary movement; but the latter is never comprehended in the former, or absolutely determined even for a time by it alone.

Limits of the influence of Shakspere and the greatest of his fellow-dramatists.

Our dramatic literature in the period contemporary with Shakspere's manhood and in that following upon his death exhibits the unmistakeable traces of his influence. In a less degree other dramatists of genius, above all Jonson and Fletcher, impressed the mark of their individualities upon the drama of their own and the succeeding generations. But had another Fletcher, another Jonson, even another Shakspere appeared, they could only have delayed and modified, they could not have permanently arrested or diverted, the current of our dramatic literature as a whole. For as an integral part of the nation's life the history of our drama was subject to the influences determining the history of the nation itself; and only by becoming a literary drama pure and simple, such *e.g.* as that of the German Romanticists was content to be in the days

of Tieck and his fellows, could it have lived an artificial life on its own conditions and forced its blossoms in its own hot-house.

Historical aspects of the period.

Many of the phenomena in that period of our dramatic literature which may be described as the period of its decline are therefore not to be understood without some knowledge of the general course of our national history in the earlier half of the seventeenth century. Such a knowledge I must here presume in my readers. But it may be possible to recall, without appealing directly to any other sources besides the dramatists spoken of in the preceding pages, some of those signs of the times which announced the close of one period in our national history and the approach of another. And with reference to these two periods it must be remembered throughout, that the one which was passing away had found in the drama an agent and an exponent of many of its determining forces; while towards the symptoms premonitory of the approach of its successor the drama could not assume any but a hostile attitude.

Approach of the Great Revolution.

It is true that even in reference to so tangible a movement as the Puritan Revolution no hard and fast line breaks the continuity of the national life. That Revolution was itself an historical growth; its roots lay as deep in the national past as the origin of many of the ideas which it combated, and of the institutions which it temporarily overthrew or permanently modified. We can now dispassionately trace the genesis of the forces which contributed to it, and estimate the results to which it led. We can recognise a conservative element in much of its political action, and a logical sequence in the developement of its religious ideas. But we need not shut our eyes to the fact, that the victory of the Puritan movement assured to it a power which outlasted its extravagances and the tyranny of the reaction in part produced by them; and that the informing spirit of Puritanism—the belief in the obligatory character of a moral law revealed to man, and interpreted to him by his individual conscience — entered into the very heart and

soul of the nation, and established an enduring hold upon it.

How a struggle, in principle defensive, for political rights which had fallen into abeyance came to be combined with a desire for religious liberty which the Tudor Reformation had ignored cannot here be shown. It is well known that the nation did not begin definitively to divide itself into two camps, until an institution of real historical significance and of at least fancied historical continuity seemed to be in danger from the new movement. King James' undignified cry of 'No bishops no King' expressed the fear which finally consolidated the Cavalier party. But from the very first those whom traditions, interests, and associations attached to existing forms in Church and State, those who clung to these forms as the visible expressions of the national past, and those who cherished them as the best guarantees of a to-morrow continuing the actualities of to-day, were naturally unhesitating in their attitude of resistance. The Court and its surroundings, the Church, the Universities, and the Legal Corporations, were conservative by instinct, whatever elements of movement might here and there have introduced themselves into these spheres of society. General literature had in individual instances emancipated itself from the control of the influences which had predominated over its growth; but its main colour was still derived from those social classes to which it chiefly addressed itself. On the theatre had fallen some of the earliest blasts of an atmosphere laden with storms of then unsuspected heaviness. Personal ill-will and a natural desire for self-preservation accordingly helped to heighten the political tone of our dramatic literature; but it was in any case almost inevitable that the dramatists and their patrons should abhor the prospect of the national life being diverted in its course from what seemed the traditions of the great Elisabethan age.

The nation gradually divided into two parties.

The party chosen by the dramatists.

But in truth the nation had begun to pass into another phase of its history, before Elisabeth had followed the arch-foe of Elisabethan England to the grave. The

The feebleness of the foreign policy of the age

memory of the great days of the Virgin Queen had already become a mere sentiment for those of her successor;—a sentiment which only another period of effort for a noble cause could convert into a really effective spring of action. Had England under James I, or even under Charles I, borne her part in the great European struggle, the historical sympathies of the nation might have been converted into powerful elements of resolution, and its attachment to the memories of the past into the mainspring of fresh action in the present. The days of Queen Elisabeth served as a popular phrase even in the mouth of Charles I when he first addressed the Parliament which was to overthrow his authority; it would have been no phrase had Ralegh been allowed to hurl defiance at Spain,—had the bold counsels of Bacon found favour with his Sovereign,—had even an English army worthy of the name been sent to save the Palatinate, with the battle-cry which had been heard from the decks of the Great Armada. As it was, the balancing policy of James and the more excusable uncertainty in the counsels of Charles doomed England to virtual inaction in the midst of a tremendous European crisis; and the ancient glories rusted in the national consciousness. This result is accurately reflected in the drama, which addressed itself to London, the very centre of popular life, where its current ran warmest and its sympathies and antipathies might have been most easily stirred.

reflected in the drama.

The reminiscences of the great Elisabethan struggle observable in the extant plays of the entire half-century are but few and feeble. To the greatness of Henry VIII's truest daughter, Shakspere—I cannot but think after her death—paid as it were a parting tribute. Not long afterwards Chapman proved that reverence for her greatness as a sovereign had survived the last opportunities of personal flattery[1]. Dekker, in a production reflecting more credit upon his patriotism than upon his art, attempts a picture of her worst dangers and her most glorious triumph[2]. Thomas Heywood recalls the early difficulties of her life

Elisabethan reminiscences.

[1] *Byron's Conspiracy*, act iii, and *passim*.

[2] *The Whore of Babylon*.

which first established her claim to be esteemed the representative of the Protestant cause[1]. But these are only the last echoes of a loyalty which had been a living sentiment in those from whom they proceeded. In the dramatic literature of the next two generations Queen Elisabeth and the glories with which her name was identified seem forgotten.

Isolated references to important transactions of contemporary European history.

The reigns of James and Charles brought no national achievements to serve as substitutes for these ancient glories; and the great events which filled the theatre of European history, and of which as a nation England remained little more than a spectator, pass all but unnoticed by references or allusions in our contemporary dramatic literature. Here and there an exceptionally striking event or character is, so to speak, made free of the stage; the siege of Ostend (which ended two days after our peace had been signed with Spain) is frequently used as an illustration by our dramatists[2]; and a generation afterwards the 'ghost of Tilly' points a joke in a comedy[3], and the death of Wallenstein is re-enacted on the London boards in a gross caricature of the historical drama[4]. But the mighty struggles of the times, which Englishmen were breathlessly following in the narratives of *Mercurius Gallobelgicus* and the flying sheets of the *New Coranto*, and of which they were swallowing such veracious versions as could be obtained from sources like the 'Staple of News Office,' were not held fit themes for treatment or even fit subjects for mention by an unemancipated drama; the deeds and the sufferings of foreign peoples were almost as sacred from theatrical comment as the persons of foreign sovereigns[5]—just as the affairs of Europe were matters not to be interfered with by the sympathies or antipathies of the people, but to be reserved for consideration among the King's mysteries of State.

The drama not allowed free comment on such topics.

[1] *If You Know not Me, You Know Nobody.*

[2] See *e.g.* Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize* (i. 3), and especially his *Love's Cure* (i. 1).

[3] Shirley's *The Example* (iii. 1).

[4] Cf. *ante*, p. 355, as to Glapthorne's *Albertus Wallenstein*.

[5] Cf. *ante*, pp. 69, and 70 note, and *infra*.

If now and then the public feeling, excited by the apparent collapse of a policy contravening the plainest traditions of the national sentiment, broke bounds and encouraged a daring playwright to unmuzzle himself along with it[1], prompt measures of repression were at hand to deal with so exceptional an audacity, and soon all was outwardly calm again. Offences, as Envy says in *Mucedorus*[2], speedily brought 'danger, or at least restraint' upon their authors; and if Thalia was schooled with rather more difficulty than her soberer sister, she too learnt the necessity of caution, and was content to substitute harmless generalities for more palpable expressions of opinion.

General public feeling, as reflected in the drama, towards particular foreign nations:

The generalities in question are not however devoid of instructiveness. Our dramatic literature in this period furnishes few clues as to what Englishmen thought or liked to hear about the foreign policy of their government; but it reveals with tolerable distinctness what they thought and liked to hear about the nations with whom that policy had to deal. National loves and hatreds do not die in a day; and though travel and peaceful intercourse had accustomed Englishmen to greater tolerance of foreigners in general — till the satirical could even describe our people as 'famous for dejecting our own countrymen' by contrast[3] — yet the old antipathies proved as long-lived as the old sympathies. The intimate relations brought about between England and Germany in the Reformation period were doubtless drawn still closer by the large number of Germans who were settled in London[4]. The course of political events increased the good-will felt by Englishmen towards their Protestant kinsmen; and the marriage of the Princess Elisabeth, which some of our dramatists helped to celebrate in loyal

Germany;

[1] Cf. *ante*, pp. 92 *seqq.*, 'as to Middleton's *A Game at Chess*, and p. 267, note, as to *The Spanish Viceroy*.

[2] *ad fin.* As to the restrictions on the liberty of the theatres in such matters, and the principal recorded occasions on which offence was given and taken, *vide infra*.

[3] So says Freshwater in Shirley's *The Ball* (iii. 3). And cf. the Tutor's advice in Shirley's *The Witty Fair One* (ii. 1).

[4] Elze (see Introduction to Chapman's *Alphonsus*, p. 9) concludes that of the 10,000 foreigners living in London in 1621 a great part were Germans.

masks, was the most popular act of the policy of King James[1]. Dutchmen would have been even more uniformly made the subject of good-humoured comment from the single point of view of their supposed favourite national propensity, had not habits and customs much more offensive to the theatre than drinking-bouts been identified in their most pronounced forms with Amsterdam[2]. An isolated act of Dutch colonial violence—in which Englishmen were the sufferers—was allowed to pass almost as unheeded by the stage as it remained unavenged by the Government[3]. The incarnation of the Danish people in the eyes of Englishmen was King James' brother-in-law Christian IV; and it is not wonderful that the memory of a certain 'heavy-headed revel' which had consecrated the alliance between the two monarchs, should have survived in allusions to a national habit in which the Danes might be regarded as more or less rivals[4]. But these are only surface hits. Towards France and Frenchmen public feeling in England could not but be friendly so long as Henry of Navarre sat on its neighbouring throne; yet it may be doubted whether his reign was long enough to allow the feelings of national good-will between the two countries to attain to any great degree of warmth, though the charms of his personal character seem to have been no secret to Englishmen[5]. After his death such hopes as might have been founded upon the designs, real or supposed, of his European policy

the Dutch;

the Danes;

France;

[1] In addition to these masks (by Campion, Chapman, and Beaumont) may be noticed the production, soon after the marriage, of a historical drama, *Hector of Germany, or The Palsgrave, Prince Elector*. It is described by Geneste, x. 95.

[2] The word 'drunk,' says Brains in Shirley's *The Witty Fair One* (ii. 2), 'is good English now: it was Dutch.' But other words and other ideas than the soldiers were supposed to have imported from the Low Countries were brought over by sectaries such as those whom Middleton rudely satirises in *The Family of Love*.

[3] The massacre at Amboyna (see below as to Dryden's play on the subject) is referred to in passing in Fletcher's *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (iv. 2). It is pointedly denounced in Shirley's *Honoria and Mammon* (i. 2), but this was printed in 1659, and probably not designed for the stage.

[4] See Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Knight of Malta* (v. 1), and Fletcher's *The Captain* (iii. 2).

[5] Cf. Chapman's *Byron's Conspiracy* and *Byron's Tragedy*.—In so late a play as D'Avenant's *The Cruel Brother* (act ii) may be observed a pointedly unfriendly characterisation of the French.

passed away; and in spite of the efforts of Buckingham, the French marriage of Charles I was looked upon by the nation chiefly in a spirit of suspicion against the dangers feared from a Catholic connexion. But the dramatists were of course too much in sympathy with the Court, and too greatly dependent upon its favours, to give expression to any such fears; and in the end they had particular occasion to identify the interests of the theatre with loyalty to the person of Queen Henrietta Maria[1]. Intercourse with France must however have steadily increased both before and after Buckingham's miserable war; and nothing is more common in the dramas of this period than a display of some knowledge of the French tongue.

Spain and Spaniards;

The deep-seated national antipathy against Spain and everything Spanish was little if at all abated by James' treaty of peace and the policy of conciliation which it ushered in. The schemes of Spain continued to be the bugbear of the popular political imagination even after their real nature any longer justified such apprehensions, while the arrogance of Spanish manners was as constantly as ever a subject of resentment and a theme of satire. I have described at some length the expression which this antipathy found on a particular occasion, when it concentrated itself in attacks upon the individual who to English eyes necessarily seemed the embodiment of Spanish policy[2]. But the ill-will which the stage loved to manifest against Spaniards in general had a deeper source than fear of the intrigues of Gondomar, or abhorrence of the scheme of the Spanish Marriage. The nation had not yet unlearnt its belief that Spain was the natural enemy of England, and the Spaniard the natural opposite of the Englishman. An ineradicable suspicion of Spain was an integral element in the national patriotism of a Bacon as well as in that of the popular talkers and writers whom by the King's orders he sought to suppress. As contrasted with Spain, France seemed worthy of 'praise and love;' and there is perhaps nothing more significant of the intensity of the

[1] *Vide infra* as to Prynne's *Histriomastix*.

[2] Cf. *ante*, pp. 92 *seqq.*; p. 267, note.

feeling, than to meet with a cultivated English poet as blind to the brilliant achievements of contemporary Spanish literature as he is keen-sighted in recalling one of the perennial social defects of the Spanish character[1]. Italy still exercised its potent charm over the minds of Englishmen; but it must not be forgotten that the Italy of our dramatists is in most cases a purely conventional scene; and that the Italian who intrigues and declaims in a hundred plays of this period is not so much a representative of his own nation, as the usual citizen of the world of dramatic fiction in general.

Italy.

Faint reflexion in the drama of the political struggle at home.

Turning our glance homewards, we shall not be surprised to observe how faint a reflexion the political struggle in progress during the whole of this period finds in its dramatic literature. It is easier to explain than to parallel so singular a phenomenon in literary history. The subjects of domestic political controversy at the most make their appearance in the form of a casual allusion; as when an accidental reference in a dramatist of no eminence reminds us that he was writing in days darkened by the activity of the Star-Chamber and the High-Commission Court[2]. Still less do we expect anything like invective or satire against the system of government which two reigns sought in vain to make permanent; and we are almost surprised when we find a warm supporter of the cause of Charles I satirically expounding a 'thorough' method of managing affairs of State as commending itself to unscrupulous ambition[3]. The venerable grievance of monopolies alone seems to command as by prescriptive right

[1] See Ford's *Love's Sacrifice* (i. 1), where Spain is described with bold untruthfulness as

'a climate
Too hot to nourish arts'—

while the Spanish nation is appropriately enough characterised as

'proud
And in [its] pride unsociable.'

[2] Brome's *The English-Moor* (i. 1).

[3] Shirley's *The Constant Maid* (iii. 1); but there are of course only one or two touches in Playfair's speech admitting of the supposition that they were suggested by observation; and I am far from wishing to insinuate that any political significance was intended even in these.

a fair measure of satire, even from the most loyal lips[1]. Their 'abolition' might almost claim to be an article of royalist belief. For the rest, even had the dramatists of this period at heart sympathised with the efforts of its Eliots and Pyms, they would have been restrained by their knowledge of the dangers awaiting those who ventured, even in spheres less subject to restraint than the theatre, to 'speak their minds freely of the prince and State[2].' But in truth they rarely offer any indication of having risen above conceptions of government harmonising with the patriarchal ideal of James I and his favourite political philosophers. They generally write, and may be fairly concluded to have thought, as if a good king, or a king who would be good enough to be good, were still the utmost possibility of State-life. The duty of the king is recognised as freely as it was by James himself; but the duty of the citizen is simply to obey his sovereign. In such men as Chapman, Massinger, and Denham, traces are observable of a manlier view of civic responsibilities, duties, and claims; but the majority of these dramatists—Fletcher may be taken as their type—seem quite unaware of any principle of government but the right divine, and of any system but absolute monarchy. Towards the close of the period we recognise a special purpose in the conventional expressions in praise of loyalty and in condemnation of sedition[3]; and it is well known that more than one of the Caroline dramatists were to give personal proofs of their fidelity to the cause of the King. But it would be useless to seek for any signs of an insight into the great political questions of the times in the dramatists of the age which preceded and prepared that of the Great Revolution.

General absolutist sentiments of the dramatists.

It must not be forgotten that the English, or in other words, the London stage addressed itself now, even more exclusively than before, to particular classes of the population; that it considered itself bound by tradition to the Court and the royal family, to the service of whose principal

The drama and the royal family

[1] See D'Avenant's *The Cruel Brother* (act i), and *Love and Honour* (act ii).
[2] Massinger's *The Roman Actor* (i. 1).
[3] See *e.g.* Suckling's *Brennoralt.*

members the theatrical companies were nominally attached; and that though it likewise appealed to popular favour and support, its authors courted the patronage of Whitehall as the highest acknowledgment of their efforts. Much therefore in the tone and spirit of our dramatic literature depended on the nature of the personal influence traceable to the throne and its immediate surroundings. King James I had been a friend to the drama in days when to favour it was to assert his own royal independence in Scotland; and in England he proved consistently well-disposed towards the stage. But it was out of the question that our dramatic literature should have been inspired either by his person, his character, or his acts, to an enthusiasm capable, like that aroused by the Virgin Queen, of becoming a really productive influence. In James' consort there was, in the expressive words of his episcopal biographer, 'little to make him uxorious,' and little to animate poets who were not officially called upon to celebrate the virtues of 'Bel-Anna.' Of the royal princes the eldest died before the promise of his youth could have ripened into fulfilment; and his sister, the fairest flower of the Court, was transplanted, amidst the sympathetic hopes of the nation, to a foreign soil. Of James' favourites none attracted the good-will of the nation, until Buckingham by entering upon a new line of foreign policy acquired a fleeting popularity. The Court could have little influence in this reign in strengthening or elevating that sentiment of loyalty which constituted so important an element in the feelings, it may be said in the moral life, of the preceding age. It was necessary to seek for inspiring examples in a wider range; but among the great nobles of this age we meet with few examples of that sunny grandeur which commands the admiration and good-will of a whole generation, and exercises so genial an influence upon the spirit of its literature. Exceptions become less rare as the condition of society in its most prominent classes recovers from its worst phase in the days of Somerset,—the nadir of the reign of James I. The accession and (after its early difficulties had been overcome) the marriage of Charles I must have in this

under James I

and Charles I.

respect exercised a beneficent influence. Only a short-sighted judgment will dispute the effect attributable—especially in such a period as this—to the personal examples of virtuous lives led on thrones; and the devotion with which so many fortunes and lives were sacrificed in the cause of King Charles I was far from being the result of an abstract principle only. The genuine love of art and letters which both Queen Henrietta Maria and her husband appear to have cherished and manifoldly displayed, no doubt contributed to the growth of a personal loyalty which would have been impossible in the previous reign; but the diatribes of embittered contemporary partisanship need not induce us to deny the great influence of the personally virtuous lives of King Charles and his Queen upon the better feelings of large classes of society. This influence is cordially acknowledged by a dramatic poet the nobility of whose moral nature I have taken an earlier opportunity of attempting to vindicate[1].

The loyalty of the dramatists.

But loyalty, and those impulses of personal attachment which are cognate to it, are not capable except in the hour of supreme conflict of absorbing in themselves the moral sentiment even of a class, still less of a nation. In the period of which I am speaking the life of English society, more especially in those spheres with which the stage was more immediately associated, needed some more universal and more enduring principle to strengthen and sweeten its current. It can hardly be doubted that religion had been on the one hand too persistently mixed up with the designs and the conflicts of political life, and on the other too obstinately identified with theological dogma, for it not to be regarded by many men and women as a thing outside their inner life. In England the religious belief of the nation had been nominally fixed by authority; the forms of religious worship had been ordered by rules for which, though confessedly human in origin, it was sought to

The drama and the national religion.

[1] See Shirley's *The Lady of Pleasure* (iv. 3):

> 'Truth, and your love of innocence, which shine
> So bright in the two royal luminaries
> At court.'

establish an irresistible fixity; and the authoritative maintenance of this system was at once an abomination in the eyes of those who conscientiously struggled against it, and perhaps an influence tending to deaden the inner significance of these forms for many who accepted them. I cannot dwell here upon this the most important aspect of the age; but it is clear that in those regions of society where life was most rapid and diverse there was a strange oscillation between indifference and unthinking superstition.

Unbelief and superstition.

In times when we may well credit the dramatist's assertion that unbelief was fashionable[1], an eager acceptance of delusions as to supernatural agencies and forces prevailed even among enlightened thinkers and reckless men of the world. Much of this is due to the slow advance of the light of science; something at least to the absence of the gentler light of influences necessarily submerged in so turbid a moral atmosphere as that which hung over so many European countries in this period of civil and religious wars. Our dramatic literature only too faithfully reproduces that void in the religious life of many to whom it addressed itself which a helpless credulity sought in vain to fill; and it is melancholy to observe how only a few of them expose, while others pander to, or at least alternately satirise and encourage[2], the prevalent superstitions connected with the belief in magic and witchcraft, and cognate monstrous creations of credulity and ignorance. But it is perhaps well to abstain from generalisations for which it would be impossible here to exhibit the basis; while it would prove almost equally difficult to show how much and how little those among our dramatists[3] who

[1] 'To be of no religion
Argues a subtle moral understanding,
And it is often cherished.'
Fletcher, *The Elder Brother* (v. 1).

[2] Of the former two categories no examples need be quoted; but the recklessness of the times in such matters seems to me to be illustrated by the circumstance that Fletcher makes Peter Vecchio in *The Chances* a self-avowed impostor, while Sulpitia in his *Custom of the Country* is a witch of real, though not irremediable, power.

[3] Massinger and Shirley—not to mention Jonson's temporary conversion.

had sought a refuge in the Church of Rome owed in the general spirit of their morality to so decisive a step.

Social vices of the Court of James I and its surroundings.

Seeming to itself to lack powerful influences in the direction of great and noble activity, and failing to admit the operation of forces helping to produce moral self-control, the society whose life is largely reflected in the drama of this period sank into a turbid depth of intrigue and secret vice and crime. It may reasonably be doubted whether the life of those classes which are most exposed to the temptations of opportunity, wealth, and pleasure, has in any age of English history been more deeply polluted than in that of James I; and much of its corruption survived into the days of his successor. The Court of James and its immediate surroundings were a hot-bed of social iniquities; the touch of its foul secrets is like that of the poisoned glove or handkerchief—the symbols if not the actual instruments of some of its darkest crimes. Mutual suspicion became in these spheres of life a necessary condition of social intercourse[1]; every one was plotting, in company or on his own account; and where several combined, there was one ready to betray the rest.

The growing importance and arrogance of London

It has always been a happy circumstance for the social life of England that the capital has never—even in the days of its most rapid and most astonishing growth—permanently succeeded in absorbing all the best forces of the nation. For good or for evil, London has never become to England what ancient Rome and modern Paris have been to the empires of which they have formed the centres. In the period of which I am speaking may be however noticed signs of an unhealthy tendency towards a consummation more nearly reached by subsequent ages. In the reigns of Elisabeth and James I London increased on a scale which for divers reasons appears to have seriously alarmed the governments of both these sovereigns; the advance of luxury and splendour in the life of the wealthier classes continued to enhance the attractions of

[1] 'Every man in this age,' says Dion in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* (i. 1), 'hath not a soul of crystal, for all men to read their actions through: men's hearts and faces are so far asunder, that they hold no intelligence.'

their place of abode or frequent resort; and the practice of spending part of the year—the Season as we call it—in London grew more general with those who came in search of the excitement and pleasure as well as with those who came for the business of Michaelmas Term[1]. The frequent progresses of Elisabeth and James I, however burdensome they may have proved to those who had the honour of providing for the royal entertainment, must have tended to decentralise the luxury of social life; still, London became more and more the seat of pleasure, magnificence, and display, the chosen home of art and literature, as well as the resort of idleness and the haunt of dissipation. Charles I's intelligent love of architecture, sculpture, and painting did much to increase the importance of the capital, while he sought in vain to counteract by legislation the growing tendency to non-residence on the part of county-gentlemen. The sense of contrast between town and country therefore begins to be a characteristic sign of the times. Nowhere could it be expected to exhibit itself more prominently than in the drama. Its pictures of manners came more and more to confine themselves to reproductions of London life, or of country life as it presented itself to the eyes of a Londoner. Those refreshing glimpses of the greenwoods and the meadows, the homesteads and the orchards of old England, which charm us in an earlier dramatist like Greene and in Shakspere, a true child of the Midlands, become rarer and rarer in his successors; and the rural life of the stage approaches that conventional fiction into which it afterwards altogether congealed. Country life is becoming as unfamiliar a sphere to the town-wits as it is to the citizens' wives in Beaumont and Fletcher's comedy who sentimentally marvel 'how fine the fields be! what sweet living 'tis in the country!' and charitably conclude as to their rural fellow-creatures, 'Poor souls, God help 'em, they live as contentedly as one of us[2].'

reflected in the drama.

From such a point of view the social types of the drama

It's favourite social types.

[1] See Middleton's comedy of that name.

[2] *A King and No King* (ii. 2). And cf. D'Avenant's *The Wits* (ii. 1).

of this period succeed one another with constant iteration. From the country come the long family of gulls who foolishly flutter towards their own destruction; in the country dwell the broken-down gentlemen whose estates are falling into the hands of successful city merchants or grasping city usurers. The decay of country-gentlemen is the frequent theme of invective or lament[1]; and Master Plenty who 'eats his venison with his neighbours in the country,' instead of presenting his game to the usurer[2], or Master Aimwell who 'keeps a warm house i' the country amongst his tenants' and takes no pride in travelling to London with a footman and a page[3], are almost exceptional types. Town life seems to be regarded as the normal state of existence, or at least as that compared with which all others are dull and tame. Again and again I have directed attention to the contemptuous scorn with which our comic dramatists[4] refer to the crude fruits of University breeding; the only school of knowledge which they recognise is the school of life in town. Here the true centre of society is the Court; next to it comes that profession in which alone money can be made in a gentlemanly way[5]; an Inns-of-Court-man is almost the equal of a courtier in the eyes of the admiring world[6]. The physician's profession is beginning to come into honour[7]; but he, like the clergyman, only holds a subordinate rank. Trade is still excluded from society; and the endeavour of citizens to make their sons gentlemen is the surest mark of their envious inferiority[8]. In this gentleman's world noble birth still holds its prerogative undisputed; and no measure is

[1] So in Massinger and Brome.

[2] Massinger's *The City Madam* (i. 2).

[3] Shirley's *The Witty Fair One* (i. 2).

[4] Middleton especially.

[5] 'There is no virtue,' says Quintiliano in Chapman's *May-Day* (act i), 'can scape the account of baseness if it get money, but gaming and law.' At the Inns of Court (*vide infra*) money was to be got in both ways.

[6] 'A fashion,' says Liladam in Massinger's *The Fatal Dowry* (v. 1), 'which any courtier or inns-of-court-man would follow willingly.'

[7] See Massinger's *A Very Woman*.

[8] 'We that had
Our breeding from a trade, cits, as you call us,

kept in pouring contempt on the mushroom growths of yesterday, the knights of recent creation[1].

Prominent features in the manners of the times.

Exclusiveness and refinement are not synonymous terms; and the outward features of the habits and manners of town society in this period ill correspond to its tendency to self-glorification. The extravagant fantasticality of the Elisabethan age survives in some of the usages of its successor; but no feature of social life is more continuous than its coarseness. The English love of drinking was as yet by no means on the decline[2]; and the grossness of the national idea of a good dinner was still such as to require centuries of gradual refinement[3]. The vice of gaming defied the regulations by which it was sought to repress it in its favourite haunts[4]; and assumed a new form in connexion with a national sport which became one of the amusements of the gay world, under conditions not highly

> Though we hate gentlemen ourselves, yet are
> Ambitious to make all our children gentlemen.'
>
> Shirley's *The Gamester* (i. 1).

[1] This familiar topic might be illustrated from an endless number of passages; some have been collected by Mr. Collier in a note to Field's *A Woman is a Weathercocke* (iii. 3).—The old and the new kinds of knights are very succinctly contrasted by Middleton in his *A Mad World, my Masters* (i. 1): 'My grandsire, Sir Bounteous Progress, is a knight of thousands, and therefore no knight since one thousand six hundred.' The name Progress is in itself excellently chosen, though from a different point of view it would have well suited some of the knights of King James I.—Altogether, there was hardly ever a less correct statement of its kind than that of Sparkish in Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (iv. 1), where the habit of making knights the favourite fools of the stage is reprehended as an innovation.

[2] Illustrations are here again too numerous to need citation; but see *e.g.* Piso's answer to the question 'Are the Englishmen such stubborn drinkers?' in Fletcher's *The Captain* (iii. 2), or Adorni's assertion (imitated from *Othello*):

> 'Your English
> . . . . . to say truth
> Out-drinks the Dutch, as is the common proverb:
> The Dutchman drinks his buttons off, the English
> Doublet and all away'—

in Glapthorne's *The Ladies' Privilege* (act iii).

[3] Holdfast's description in Massinger's *The City Madam* (ii. 1) is hardly a caricature. 'The pheasants drench'd with anbergris' may be cited as a typical delicacy of the age. That criticism was beginning to exert itself on the important subject of dinners may however be gathered from Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Woman-Hater* (i. 2).

[4] *viz.* the Inns of Court. See the note in Dodsley (vol. vii, 1825) on a passage in W. Rowley's *A Match at Midnight* (i. 1).

conducive to refinement[1]. The passion for dress raged with unabated vigour in both sexes, and gave full employment to the artists devoted to the invention of 'strange and exquisite new fashions[2].' From the 'neat historical shirts[3]' and 'religious petticoats[4]' whose fresco-embroideries must have recalled the robes of Queen Elisabeth in all her glory, to the Spanish and Danish and Italian novelties of James' reign, dress went on to that elegant artificiality of costume which is so well known to us from the portraits by Vandyke. The height of effeminacy in male fashions—typified in the love-locks which enraged Prynne[5]—and of artificiality in female—typified in the patches of taffety which graced the cheeks of the ladies[6] of Henrietta Maria's Court—might seem to have been reached when the Puritan days brought with them a temporary reaction. What is most noteworthy in reference to such matters in this period is the warmth with which Englishmen sought to excel in the most frivolous and least manly of accomplishments[7], and the eagerness with which they welcomed the foreign fashions, introduced by the travelled gallants, who often brought home little better worth the bringing than the knowledge with which Onos returned to Corinth after putting a girdle about Europe[8]. Forks and toothpicks[9], and cognate inventions of foreign ingenuity, were

Extravagance, artificiality, and effeminacy in dress.

Importation of foreign fashions.

[1] See Shirley's *Hyde Park*.

[2] See the Tailor in Fletcher's *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (iv. 2).

[3] Fletcher's *The Custom of the Country* (ii. 3).

[4] Mayne's *The City-Match* (ii. 2).

[5] Cf. Shirley's *The Bird in a Cage* (i. 1).—The long hair worn by men in the previous generation is satirised by one of the dramatists themselves. 'I know many young gentlemen wear longer hair than their mistresses.' Middleton's *More Dissemblers besides Women* (i. 4).

[6] Cf. Glapthorne's *The Ladies' Privilege* (act iii, *ad in.*). 'Pretty!' says the Queen in Suckling's *Aglaura* (i. 1), looking upon a flower in one of her ladies' hands; 'is it the child of nature, or of some fair hand?' 'Tis as the beauty,' is the reply, 'of some faces, *art's issue only*.'

[7] See Fletcher's *The Island Princess* (i. 1), where the 'Portugals' and Spaniards are said to seek to excel in riding, the French in courtship, and 'the dancing English in carrying a fair presence.' And cf. Massinger's *The Emperor of the East* (i. 2) for a description of the effeminate life of a 'young courtier.'

[8] See Fletcher's *The Queen of Corinth* (ii. 4).

[9] Cf. Fletcher's *The Chances* (i. 2); Shirley's *The Ball* (i. 1).

the trophies of travels which in the Tudor days had enriched the English world with very different novelties from beyond the sea.

Partial advance of refinement in manners.

The amusements of life were doubtless to some degree refined and civilised by contact with foreign usages and manners; though the world was ready to suspect what was harmless[1], it can hardly be doubted that in the days of Henrietta Maria English society learnt something of innocent gaiety as well as of doubtful lightness from France. There is moreover an abatement of fierceness perceptible in the conduct of social life, which is by no means to be confounded with the tendency to effeminacy of manners. If it was complained that men had begun to wear poniards instead of swords[2], there was a reason for this besides the imitation of foreign fashions. The practice of duelling, after being reduced to an elaborate system of procedure, was gradually, if not falling into disuse, at least partially conforming itself to respect for the law, and coming to be openly declared a social enormity[3].

Imperfect educational culture.

Of the two influences which contribute most directly to refine and soften the manners of an age, we find indeed evidence enough in this period among the classes of society whose condition I am more especially seeking to illustrate. But the social value set upon the higher culture which

[1] See Shirley's *The Ball*.

[2] Fletcher's *The Custom of the Country* (ii. 3).

[3] The subject is a tolerably complicated one. The practice of duelling is visited with censure in Fletcher's *The Queen of Corinth* (iv. 4; see Conon's speech), and in his *The Little French Lawyer* (i. 1; see Cleremont's speech); but from Glapthorne's *The Ladies' Privilege* (act iii, Adorni) it would seem that the 'Land's laws' were contemned when this play was written (1640 *circ.*?). In Massinger's *The Guardian* (ii. 1) the practice is vehemently deplored, and in D'Avenant's *The Just Italian* (act iv, *ad fin.*) spoken of as unreasonable. From Webster and W. Rowley's *A Cure for a Cuckold* (*temp.* Charles I) it would appear that duels between Englishmen had to be fought out of the country—on Calais sands. The allusions to the systematic regulation of the art of quarrelling and duelling (which could not but lead to its gradual discontinuance), to the famous handbook of Coranza, and to professional swordsmen are very frequent; see *e.g.* Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* (iv. 3); Fletcher's *Love's Cure* (Priorato *passim*); Fletcher and Shirley's *Love's Pilgrimage* (v. 4); Massinger's *The Unnatural Combat* (ii. 2); and D'Avenant's play just cited (act iv).

education gives must have greatly varied even in those classes to which it was most readily accessible. Shirley's Bombo in describing ignorance as 'every day coming into fashion[1]' merely introduces a joke against bad writing; but the passage may be taken as indicating deficiencies of a glaring character, if not of general occurrence. Letters had been encouraged by a long line of sovereigns; but it is education rather than the example of patronage which makes a love of good literature a national sentiment; and it is probable that even a more select public than that addressed by the sham pedlars in Fletcher and Shirley's *The Night-Walker*[2] would have preferred their literary wares, or the antique romances commended by Calipso in Massinger's *The Guardian*[3], to more nutritious food. A nobler conception of the relations between the two sexes, in fine, such as was in many individual instances brought into relief by the troubles and the trials of the great conflict (Charles and his Queen, the Earl and the Countess of Strafford, the Duke and the Duchess of Newcastle), would, if more universally prevalent, have largely contributed to purify and elevate the society of the preceding period. But one cannot shut one's eyes to the opposite influences, on which our dramatic literature furnishes only too copious a commentary. On this topic I do not care to dwell further, except to remark that there must have been much in the training of women to produce the effects so persistently illustrated by the dramatists. Of female education in the narrower sense of the word it is needless to speak; this was doubtless generally at the best confined to the hurried teaching of a few superficial accomplishments[4]; but it is easy to recognise in the ex-

Unsatisfactory relations between the sexes.

The women of the period.

[1] Shirley's *The Royal Master* (iii. 3). Cf. a similar sally (of a much earlier date) in Chapman; *ante*, p. 26, note 1.

[2] iii. 3.

[3] i. 2.

[4] 'You've many daughters so well brought up, they speak French naturally at fifteen, and they are turned to the Spanish and Italian half a year after.' Middleton, *More Dissemblers besides Women* (i. 4). It may be observed that during the whole of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the instances are comparatively rare in England—and in Northern countries in general—of that type

cessive demureness which was evidently demanded from girls and women of all classes, and of which the 'mannerly forsooth[1]' is the typical expression, the evidence of an artificial system of training frequently productive of the most disastrous results. The fetters were clasped so tightly that when cast off they were flung to the winds, frivolity, folly, and vice imposing in their place the bonds of a new servitude. Under happier circumstances Queen Henrietta Maria might perhaps have proved better able to introduce together with more liberal manners more liberal principles of intercourse; but the age was too suspicious to welcome her efforts in this direction, and if she sanctioned (as seems probable) the foolish fashion of 'Platonic love[2],' not all of them were distinguished by prudence. But if we rightly despise the scandal which aspersed her fame, we may alike refuse absolute trust to the picture drawn by so many dramatists of the standard of female virtue prevailing in humbler spheres. And in any case, we shall prefer to refrain from drawing invidious conclusions as to this or any other aspect of a past age—and we may well rest assured that our dramatists might have found many noble models of female purity and virtue to inspire their creations, and can only regret that they made so partial a use of the opportunities they possessed.

From these notes on the age and society in which the dramatists of this period lived and which their works illustrate, it is time to pass to the more special conditions

of the highly educated woman which was one of the most beautiful products of the Italian Renascence. This contrast has been pointed out with much force by Gregorovius in his biography of *Lucrezia Borgia*.

[1] Holyday's *Technogamia* (i. 2); and cf. Fletcher's *Love's Cure* (iii. 4), where however Clara is not precisely a type of maiden demureness. 'Forsooth' afterwards came to be regarded as a *bourgeois* phrase; see Sir R. Howard's *The Committee* (i. 1), and Mrs. Centlivre's *The Platonic Lady* (iii. 1). For the manners of fashionable ladies see Shirley's *Hyde Park*, if a direct kind of portraiture be desired. But I may remark that I have in the above illustrations thought myself justified in adopting Dyce's view that 'Shirley and his contemporaries, wherever their Scene is laid, generally make their characters think, and speak, and act like those that were moving around them.' (Note to *Dramatis Personae* of *Love Tricks*.)

[2] See as to D'Avenant's comedy of *The Platonic Lovers*, *ante*, p. 361.

attaching to the production, and in some degree affecting the character, of these works themselves.

The stage under James I and Charles I.

The history of the theatre in the reigns of James I and Charles I is a subject on which it forms no part of my purpose to touch, except in so far as the character of our dramatic literature in this period may in some of its features be more easily understood by help of it. Apart from occasional offences against the restrictions imposed by authority (for to this rather than to any real opposition to those restrictions themselves the recorded cases amount), the stage of these times had but one hostile power to dread. But the enmity of that power was inveterate and irreconcileable, and in the end virtually destroyed for a time the activity of the theatre.

Its relations with the King and the Court.

From the Court, which in the first two Stuart reigns constituted more absolutely than in the Tudor times the centre of the social life of the upper classes in London, the stage received nothing but consistent good-will. In the first and the second years of James I's reign the principal companies of players, hitherto nominally attached to the service of great officers of State or powerful noblemen, were by virtue of royal patents taken into the service of the King, the Queen, and other members of the royal family respectively [1]. Thus towards the close of this reign, five companies, all officially connected with the Court, appear to have constituted the principal bodies of actors in London [2]; and one of the first acts of Charles I was to

[1] The Lord Chamberlain's Company (of which Shakspere and Richard Burbadge were members) on May 19th, 1603, by virtue of a Patent under the Great Seal became the King's Servants. For the Privy Seal which preceded the Patent by two days, see Collier, i. 348, and Hazlitt, *The English Drama and Stage, &c.*, p. 38. The Earl of Worcester's players were similarly taken into the service of the Queen, and the Earl of Nottingham's into that of the Prince of Wales (Collier, i. 350; who quotes Gilbert Dugdale's *Time Triumphant*, for which cf. Nichols' *Progresses of James I*, i. 408 *seqq*. On Prince Henry's lamented death in 1612 the services of his company were transferred under a Patent to the Elector Palatine (Collier, i. 379; Hazlitt, p. 44). The Children of the Chapel (as they had been called under Elisabeth) were from the year 1603 called the Children of Her Majesty's Revels, and afterwards the Queen of Bohemia's Servants (Collier, i. 352; Hazlitt, p. 40).

[2] Collier, i. 432. 'All the ancient Divells Chappels,' says Prynne in one of

renew the royal licence to the King's company of comedians[1]. Already in 1603 the right had been withdrawn from members of the nobility of authorising the performance of plays in any part of the country[2]; and when in 1618 a company called Her Majesty's Servants was licensed to play in places out of town, they were at the same time prohibited from remaining in any place for more than fourteen days[3]. A centralisation of theatrical performances was thus brought about which very markedly affected the character of our dramatic literature. The royal favour, which in times of difficulty might even be depended upon for a bounty towards supplying the most ordinary professional necessities[4], was the first condition of prosperity, if not of existence; and the authority of the Crown could more directly and constantly than ever assume the control of the stage.

Legislative and official control of the stage.

Upon the whole, however, the exercise of this authority, whether proceeding on the basis of Parliamentary statutes or by Orders in Council, and whether making itself felt through the regular official channel of the Master of the Revels or by direct personal interference on the part of the King, appears to have been both sparing and judicious. In 1606 a general statute (directed against the 'jesting and profane' use of sacred names on the stage) imposed a definite but perfectly legitimate restraint in one direction upon the licence of dramatists or actors[5]. To a supervision of acting plays from this point of view the vigilance of the Master of the Revels was therefore consistently directed; and the elastic authority of the High-Commission Court on at least one occasion interfered with the same object[6].

the Dedications of his *Histriomastix* (1633), 'are five in number;' and he complains that a sixth house (Whitefriars) had 'now' been added to them.

[1] Collier, ii. 2; Hazlitt, p. 57.

[2] Collier, i. 360.

[3] *Ib.* i. 412.

[4] In 1625 the King granted 100 marks to his Players for 'apparel.' Collier, ii. 6; Hazlitt, p. 61.

[5] Collier, i. 369; Hazlitt, p. 42.

[6] It was accordingly an official as well as a moral contentment which induced Sir Henry Herbert to place on record his approval, as contrasting with the 'brushings' which he had of late had to administer to the 'quality,' of so

A more delicate task was that of preventing the theatre from trenching on the dangerous ground of political references or allusions. We cannot be surprised that in the reign of James I, who instructed his son to appreciate a King's obligation to Heaven 'for making him a little God to sit on his throne[1],' an ordinance should have been passed against 'representing any modern Christian King' in plays on the stage[2]. The date and the occasion of this Order is unknown; but it furnished a convenient safeguard against the most objectionable kind of theatrical personality. Offences were occasionally committed against it, and led to more or less prompt measures of interference[3]. Unwelcome political or personal allusions in particular passages required a nicer judgment; and we have incidentally noted occasions which show some latitude of liberty to have been allowed, as well as others which led to unpleasant consequences for authors or actors[4]. In general the theatre could hardly expect a

exemplary a play as Shirley's *The Young Admiral*. (See Dyce's Introduction to Shirley's *Works*, p. xix, and cf. *ante*, p. 324). The introduction of offensive oaths into Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady* subjected the actors to censure from the High-Commission Court (cf. vol. i. p. 579, note 3). In 1634 the Master of the Revels struck out from D'Avenant's comedy of *The Wits* a number of exclamations which the official eye regarded in the light of oaths; but the King on being appealed to caused the restoration of "'faith, death, 'slight' as being asseverations and no oaths; as is duly recorded by Sir Henry Herbert, who humbly submits to his 'master's judgment; but under favour conceives' these expressions 'to be oaths, and enters them here to declare his opinion and submission.' (Collier, ii. 57.)

[1] *Religio Regis.*

[2] Collier, i. 449.

[3] The most noteworthy case is that of Middleton's *Game at Chess* (1624), which had passed the eye of the Master of the Revels before it was interfered with (cf. *ante*, p. 68). Either this Order, or more general considerations of propriety, led to other interpositions of authority. In 1604 a tragedy, not extant, on the subject of the conspiracy of Gowry, is said to have been in danger of being prohibited; perhaps this play occasioned the Order in question. (Cf. Collier, i. 358.) A scene in Chapman's *Byron's Conspiracy*, where the Queen of France was unbecomingly introduced, gave offence in 1608 (cf. *ante*, p. 4). In 1617 an attempt to bring upon the stage a representation of the death of the Marquis d'Ancre was nipped in the bud by the vigilance of the Privy Council. As the responsibility of the Marshal's death was assumed by the young King Lewis XIII (cf. Schmidt, *Geschichte Frankreichs*, iii. 440), this proceeding was directed by obvious political caution.

[4] Among the latter, the case of *Eastward Ho* in 1605 will be especially

liberty of speech concerning matters of State which the government of James denied to the public at large[1]. Charles I's good-will to the stage did not however prevent him in one instance at least from personally assuming the functions of censor[2]; and when soon afterwards he again complained of an indiscreet political reference in a play, we meet with almost the only recorded instance of insubordination on the part of the players—a remarkable illustration in little of the signature of the times at large[3].

Puritan hostility to the theatre.

For the rest, so far as legislative or Crown action was concerned, the theatre was until the time of its suppression protected by the royal good-will from the effects of the growth of the Puritan hostility against it. The civic authorities were indeed on one occasion (in *1617*) successful in

remembered (cf. *ante*, p. 4).—In 1631 Sir H. Herbert refused to license a play by Massinger, because of its introduction of 'dangerous matter, as the deposing of Sebastian King of Portugal' (Collier, ii. 26). This play has now been discovered in *Believe as You List* (*ante*, p. 287). On the production of Shirley and Chapman's *The Ball* (1632; cf. *ante*, p. 322) the Master of the Revels objected to the manner in which 'divers lords and others of the Court' were personated in it, but was satisfied by promises of omissions and not 'suffering it to be done by the poet any more.' (Collier, ii. 44.) The summary interference of civic authority with Tailor's *The Hog hath lost his Pearl* (Collier, i. 384; cf. *ante*, p. 357) can hardly be regarded as anything but a special proceeding against an offence committed under exceptional circumstances.—A peculiar case is that of a play called *The Spanish Viceroy* (supposed to have been by Massinger), which, probably on account of its supposed allusions to Gondomar, the players in 1624 ventured to act without licence, whereupon they were forced to make a humble apology and promise not to venture on any other such offence. (See Introduction to Cunningham's *Plays of Massinger*, p. xii; and cf. *ante*, p. 267, note.)

[1] See the Proclamation against excess of lavish speech of matters of State (probably drawn up by Bacon himself) in Spedding's *Letters and Life of Bacon*, vii. 156.

[2] In 1639 Charles I ordered a passage in a play by Massinger called *The King and the Subject*, which contained a dangerous expression about an intention to

'raise supplies what ways we please
And force you to subscribe to blanks'—

to be changed as 'too insolent.' (Collier, ii. 88.)

[3] At the time when Charles I was projecting a second expedition against the Scotch in 1640, he took occasion personally to complain to the Master of the Revels of a play acted at the Cockpit which 'had relation to the passages of the King's journey to the North.' The actors failed to comply with the prohibition which ensued; but do not appear to have been treated with severity (Collier, ii. 99).

preventing the establishment of a new theatre, but they failed in their subsequent endeavour (in 1619) to suppress the old one in the same locality—Blackfriars[1]. The complaints of the inhabitants of that neighbourhood, renewed in 1631 and 1633, seem to have fallen on deaf ears[2]. Though in the famous Declaration of the year 1618 concerning Lawful Sports to be used on Sundays, and in its still more famous revival in 1633, stage-plays were among the entertainments excepted from authorisation for that day[3], we cannot view this in the light of a concession to Puritan views. The first statute passed in Charles I's reign (1625) had enforced the same restriction[4]. When on the prevalence of the Plague in town theatrical amusements were temporarily suppressed there in 1637, the customary leave was granted to the King's Company to resort to the country; and seven months afterwards the prohibition was removed[5].

Its slight effects upon official and legislative measures.

The hostility of the Puritans to the theatre however found many ways of expressing itself. The institution was 'a very great beam, an exceeding great beam[6]' in their eyes: and if it was 'a necessity' and a fashion with them 'to rail against plays' among one another[7], it was a duty of conscience to seek to convert words into action. Compared with the theatre, such minor 'profane exercises' as 'playing at barley-break, moulding of cockle-bread[8],' and even baiting of bears might seem to sink into insignificance. And an uneasy feeling must at all times have prevailed in the neighbourhood of Blackfriars and elsewhere in London, that perverts might be made in the way exemplified in *The Muse's Looking-Glass*[9]. The apprentices of the City could not fail, together with the strong draughts administered to their robust cravings by Thomas Heywood and his fellows, to imbibe tastes which in after-life would refuse to be satisfied by the spectacle of the Lord Mayor's Pageant in its annual progress through Cheapside. And, though doubtless the dramatists loved to exaggerate the

Its intensity and bitterness.

[1] Collier, i. 400, 415. [2] *Ib.* ii. 31, 50. [3] *Ib.* i. 413; ii. 49.
[4] *Ib.* ii. 1; Hazlitt, p. 59. [5] Collier, ii. 74, 82.
[6] Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (v. 3). [7] Jonson's *The Alchemist* (iii. 2).
[8] Brome's *Covent Garden Weeded* (act iv). [9] *Ante*, p. 343.

opposition of City wives to the principles as well as to the domestic comfort of City husbands, the spirit of ambition or of curiosity may have stirred many female hearts to sigh for a day which would place their owners 'at a mask' more comfortably than in the throng at Court, or even 'in a private box ta'en up at a new play[1];' or to hope against hope for 'leave to see the theatre twice a week[2].'

Its short-sightedness.

The motives which prompted the Puritan hatred of the theatre were not ignoble; the spirit which had produced that hatred was in its origin a lofty spirit; but the manner in which it manifested itself was shortsighted, and the result to which it tended was that which often springs from a policy of total abstinence. The Puritans were in earnest in their desire to cleanse and elevate the life and the morality of their age, but they failed to recognise the true answer to the question whether it was well to banish from society the presentment, under its own natural conditions, of a form of literature well adapted if 'well used' to 'instruct to good life, inform manners,' and 'no less persuade and lead men, than they' sought to 'threaten and compel them[3].' To such a question the Puritans would probably have replied, that dramatic literature, as it presented itself on the stage, could not be well used, because of the evil admixture contained in it. But it was precisely herein that their error lay. They made no attempt to reform the stage; what they desired was to annihilate it.

Its powers and its prospects.

This endeavour could as a matter of course for a long time be only carried on in a tentative way. The action of the legislature could not be expected to suppress an institution enjoying the constant favour of the Crown and the nobility, though, as Gifford says, actors and spectators little knew that they were 'sporting on the verge of a precipice,' when the gossips in one of Jonson's later comedies hopefully appealed to the possibilities of Parliaments

[1] Massinger's *The City Madam* (ii. 2).

[2] Massinger's *The Guardian* (i. 2).

[3] I borrow the noble language of Jonson, in a passage of a more general and in part different bearing, in his *Discoveries*.

—if Parliaments there were to be—in the future[1]. And the temper of the House of Commons was gradually growing to be such, that its ear might well lend itself to supplications to which it would not have even listened in the days of Elisabeth. What could be *done*, was only for the civic authorities to exert, or even stretch, their powers in the way already referred to[2]; and for country authorities, animated by a similar spirit, not to let an opportunity pass of dealing with such 'wandering Rogues' as might place themselves in their power[3]. What could be *said* and *written*, and could thus contribute to influence the public mind in the direction of the suppression of stage-plays, belonged to a sphere of effort seemingly more at the command of the adversaries of the detested institution.

Anti-theatrical literature, 1616–1625.

An examination of publications directed against the stage is fortunately not requisite in a sketch of the history of our dramatic literature; and I may therefore, with one exception, content myself with merely referring to the works of this kind preserved from the period under notice. The mantle of Gosson and Stubbes[4] fell on a succession of shoulders. In 1616, the year of Shakspere's death, the author of a treatise apparently written in the favourite Theophrastic manner of the times, undertakes to prove the assertion that 'player is now a name of contempt;' and furnishes an odd compound of attacks upon the profession and its irreligious practices, and of remarks on the art of acting which betray some experience of it on one or the other side of the curtain[5]. In 1625, *A Short*

[1] 'Well, they talk we shall have no more parliaments, God bless us! but an we have, I hope Zeal-of-the-land Busy and my gossip Rabbi Troubletruth will start up, and see we shall have painful good ministers to keep school and catechise our youth, and not teach them to speak plays and act fables of false news in this manner, to the super-vexation of town and country.' *The Staple of News* (act iii *ad fin.*).

[2] Cf. *ante*, p. 408, note.

[3] See Collier, i. 47, as to the proceedings of the Corporation at Banbury in 1633 against a company of players who had found their way to that Puritanical town.

[4] Cf. vol. i. pp. 249, 250.

[5] See Hazlitt, p. 228 *seqq.* The title of the whole publication is *The Rich Cabinet Furnished with Varietie of Descriptions*, by T. G. — Gainsford perhaps, according to Mr. Hazlitt's conjectural query.

Treatise of Stage Playes was presented to the first Parliament of Charles I, with a request that upon view of the treatise the matter of stage-plays might be once more taken into consideration, and that 'by some few words added to the former Statutes' plays might be 'restreyned for euer hereafter[1].' Parliament however was contented with the act already noticed prohibiting the performance of plays on Sundays; and it is not till some years later that we come across the next, and the most famous, literary effort of Puritan hostility against the stage in the famous *Histrio-Mastix, the Players Scourge, or Actor's Tragaedie*, by William Prynne (published in 1632, though dated 1633).

Prynne's Histrio-mastix (1632).

This *magnum opus* of Puritan enthusiasm and learning —for it exhibits both qualities in a very extraordinary degree—appears to have been the fruit of seven years' labour. Its author, who was a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, seems to have been encouraged to his undertaking by the circumstance, that the Benchers of that Inn had, unlike their brethren in the Temple and at Gray's Inn, prohibited the 'disorderly Bacchanalian Grand-Christmasses' which it was customary to celebrate by dramatic or quasi-dramatic entertainments. To them therefore in the first instance, to the students of the Inns of Court, too long known as the patrons of stage-plays, in the second, and finally to the Christian Reader in general, he dedicates his work. It is no light shaft which he directs against the object of his wrath; for the book consists of more than a thousand closely-printed small quarto pages—as why should it not, when the play-books which it assaults are

[1] See Hazlitt, p. 231 *seqq*. This pamphlet, which is extremely learned, developes seven 'reasons which proue Stage-playes to be unlawfull:' their heathen origin, their impious or abominable subjects, the vices of players (of which the assumption by men of women's apparel is first, as offending against Deut. xxii. 5), the participation in sin of which spectators are guilty, the evil effects of plays, the censures passed upon them by 'all orthodoxall Protestantz of all ages and times which maintayned the generall doctrine of the Catholike Church,' as well as by Papists, Parliament, the Civil Law and eminent heathens, and finally the judgments inflicted by God upon players and beholders, from the death of King Philip of Macedonia to fatalities which attended the fall of a playhouse at London in 1583, and a Jesuit performance at Lyons in 1607.

occasionally growing 'from Quarto into Folio,' and 'Shackspeers Plaies are printed in the best Crowne paper, far better than most Bibles.' Prynne's treatise is accordingly as solid as it is elaborate,—the work of an indefatigable reader who never fails to give chapter and verse for every one of the thousands of quotations constituting the bulk of his materials, who disposes his arguments in regularly arranged groups (grimly distributed into Parts, Acts, and Scenes), and puts each argument forward in regular syllogistic form. Occasionally a 'Chorus' of reflexions is introduced, and a 'Catastrophe,' with a long quotation from the Jesuit Mariana and a short passage from St. Augustine, concludes the whole. The tone of the work is in general dry and calm; but the author is capable of rising to eloquence, as in the final exhortation in act v of the Second Part. In the choice of the arguments themselves, as will be seen from the brief sketch of the book appended in a note[1],

[1] The following is the course of the argument of *Part I:*

Stage-plays had their original from the Devil (act i. sc. 1); were invented and practised by his instruments ('Idolatrous Infidels and the deboisest Pagans'), (sc. 2); are therefore necessarily sinful and unlawful unto Christians (act ii); they are the pomps and vanities of this wicked world which Christians renounce in baptism (*Chorus*). They are unlawful, because their style and subject-matter are scurrilous and obscene (act iii. sc. 1), bloody and tyrannical (sc. 2), heathenish and profane (in the oaths which they introduce and the vices and villanies which they represent), (sc. 3), false and fabulous (sc. 4), often impious, sacrilegious, and blasphemous (in their misuse of the Sacred Name especially), (sc. 5), mostly satirically invective against persons and offices, especially against religion and religious Christians (here the objection is waived aside that it is not against persons but against their vices that plays direct their satire), (sc. 6), idle, frothy, superfluous and unprofitable, 'as vaine as vanity it selfe' (sc. 7). They are sinful and utterly unlawful to Christians, in respect both of their actors (witness the Fathers, Marcus Aurelius, &c. and 'two penitent reclaimed Play-Poets,' *viz.* the author of *The Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theaters*, 1588, and Stephen Gosson), (act iv. sc. 1), and of their spectators (no argument to be drawn *per contra* from the circumstance that 'perchance some few exorbitant histrionicall (but far from good) Divines, at leastwise from good Christians, *may* sometimes attend Theaters,' or that 'some puny unconverted Christian Novices may be occasionally drawne unto Stage-playes'), (sc. 2). They are likewise so in respect of their concomitants, *viz.* hypocrisy (all acting is dissimulation), (act v. sc. 1), obscenity and lasciviousness (sc. 2), gross effeminacy (sc. 3), extreme vanity &c. (sc. 4), the nature of the characters acted (heathen gods, devils &c.), (sc. 5), the ordinary apparel of the performers, which is womanish (sc. 6), and costly and lewd (sc. 7), the lascivious dancing (sc. 8) and songs (sc. 9) and music (sc. 10) introduced into them, and the profuse lascivious laughter which they provoke (sc. 11). They are so moreover from their pernicious effects, *viz.* the 'prodigall mispence of much precious time' (act vi. sc. 1), the 'prodigall vaine expence of money or estate' (from *2d.* to sometimes 4 or 5*s.* day by day, 'if Coach-hire, Boate-hire, Tobacco, Wine, Beere and suchlike vaine expences be cast into the reckoning'), (sc. 2); besides which they foment divers sinful lusts (sc. 3), actual sin (sc. 4), corrupt the minds and vitiate the manners of both actors and spectators (sc. 5), produce sloth and idleness (sc. 6), luxury and drunkenness (sc. 7), banish modesty and shamefacedness (sc. 8), teach treachery, cozenage and deceit (sc. 9), 'cruelty, fiercenesse, brawles, seditions, tumults, murthers and the like' (sc. 10), 'idle, frothie, scurrilous, lewde, prophane discourse' (sc. 11), indispose men to religious duties and thus render ineffectual religious ordinances (sc. 12), call forth antipathy to the practical power of grace and holiness (sc. 13); 'inamor' men with sin and vanity and harden them in their sins (sc. 14), 'effeminate' actors and spectators (sc. 15), 'incorporate' men *into* 'lewde, deboist, ungodly company' (sc. 16), draw them on to atheism, heathenism, and gross *idolatry* and profaneness (sc. 17), cause a manifest breach of *all* God's Commandments (sc. 18), draw God's fearful judgments upon their composers, actors, and spectators and upon '*those* Republikes that tolerate or approve them' (sc. 19), and 'eternally damne men's soules' ('a fruit, a consequent with a witnesse, which should cause all Players, all Play-poets, all Play-haunters to looke about them'), (sc. 20). Act vii contains the *authorities* against stage-plays 'marshalled in seven distinct squadrons,' *viz.* Canonical and Apocryphal Scripture (sc. 1), 'the whole primitive Church both before and under the Law and Gospell' (sc. 2), Councils, Synods, and Canonical Constitutions (sc. 3, which fills 113 pages by itself), ancient Fathers of the Church (sc. 4), modern Christian writers (including Petrarch, Wicliffe, Æneas Sylvius, Mr. John Calvin, Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr, Matthew Parker, Bellarmine, and Dr. Thomas Beard in his *Theatre of God's Judgment* (second edition, 1631)—110 being nominally mentioned,

there is nothing new; but they are nowhere else developed with anything like the same fulness; and for the historian of the drama Prynne's treatise furnishes an ample repository of much useful learning. It is to be observed that his acquaintance with the stage-plays of his own times was obviously of the most limited description. He states that on his first arrival in London he had 'heard and seene foure severall Playes, to which the importunity of some ill acquaintance drew me whiles I was yet a novice;' and in one passage he refers to a reflexion upon Puritan attacks against the stage made in a play produced at the opening of the new theatre (the Whitefriars). But he never quotes, or otherwise appeals to illustrations, from the English drama of his own or any other period. As to 'professed printed Play-Champions,' he observes that he only knows of two, both 'scribbling hackney Players'—*viz.* Lodge in his *Play of Playes* and (Thomas) Heywood in his *Apology for Actors;* and to the arguments of the latter he addresses himself at length. The treatise is not designed to promote any less object than the total suppression of stage-plays; and from this point of view the whole of the argument is conducted.

Its consequences to the author.

Prynne's treatise, as is well known, led to his being summoned before the High-Commission Court and Star-Chamber, which condemned his book to be burnt, and the author to be expelled from the Bar and his Inn, to stand in the pillory, to lose both his ears, to pay a fine of £5000 to the King, and be perpetually imprisoned. It is not

and the whole array estimated at 'above 150 moderne Protestant and Popish authors of all sortes'), (sc. 5), heathen writers and philosophers (including Plautus), (sc. 6), and Pagan and Christian States and Magistrates (sc. 7). The *Chorus* points out how the two champions of Stage-plays, Lodge and Heywood, 'cannot withstand these all-conquering troopes.' However, in Act viii the author proceeds to the refutation of apologetic objections, *viz.* that plays are not prohibited, but rather approved and commended by Scripture (sc. 1), that they were tolerated and applauded as innocent, pleasant, and honest recreation by Greeks and Romans (Heywood), (sc. 2), that they are not only commendable, but necessary in a commonwealth for solemnities and for the recreation of the people (Heywood), (sc. 3), that they are lawful as ancient and 'frequented by many, yea most' (Heywood), (sc. 4), that they contain much good history, counsel, poetry, wit, and learning (sc. 5), that they are as good as sermons and that many learn as much good at a play as at a sermon ('Oh blasphemy intollerable,' as already previous authors have exclaimed), (sc. 6), that (as was scurrilously observed at the Whitefriars) nobody but Puritans objects to them (this section includes the vindication of Puritanism referred to in the text and is the most interesting passage of the book).—The comparatively brief *Part II* draws the Conclusions which result from the above (here there is a *lacuna* in the Cambridge University Library copy): the writing of stage-plays is unlawful to Christians (act ii. sc. 1), the profession of actors is infamous (the distinction made in favour of academical plays is untenable), (sc. 2), and unlawful (sc. 3); likewise the beholding of plays (act iii). Act iv refutes various objections, *viz.* why should a play not be written, acted, and seen acted if it may be read; plays have their educational uses; they explain and impress upon the mind 'dark histories;' as men go to see a play without evil purpose, what harm can there be in it; practically plays do no harm to many. Act v concludes the whole with an exhortation couched in terms of earnest, almost passionate eloquence, terminating with the discourse of Mariana and the passage from St. Augustine noted in the text as the 'catastrophe' of this 'tragedy.'

quite clear on what grounds this sentence was passed—but there can be little doubt of the special reason which determined it. This appears to have been found, not in passages admitting of a very direct application to the existing Government and to the authorised ritual of the Church, but in a reflexion added to the Table of Contents. The reflexion in question, which accompanied the heading as to the practice of women-actors (mentioned in the text as 'lately introduced in a Play personated in Blacke-friers Play-house'), seemed intolerable to official and to loyal eyes. For, about the time when the book was published—according to one account on the day before, according to another but shortly afterwards—the Queen and her ladies had themselves acted in a Pastoral at Whitehall[1]. There is no reason to suppose Prynne to have intended any personal reference; and the statement (of Whitelocke) that Laud represented the passage as such to the King need not be credited. But the coincidence was one which could not fail to attract public attention, and there is no reason to doubt the contemporary statement that it was made the basis of the enquiry and of the sentence which followed[2].

Prynne was not placed in the pillory till May, 1634; but already during his previous imprisonment, and for some time afterwards, the echo of the excitement produced by the whole transaction makes itself heard in contemporary dramatic literature[3]. In the theatrical world it would

[1] This pastoral appears to be that mentioned in a letter from Mr. Pory to Sir Thomas Puckering of September 20th, 1632, as one 'penned by Mr. Walter Montague, wherein her Majesty is pleased to act a part, as well for her recreation as for the exercise of her English.' Its title was *The Shepherd's Paradise*, and Sir John Suckling described it as perfectly unintelligible. See Maidment and Logan's *The Dramatic Works of Sir Wm. D'Avenant*, i. 283, 285.

[2] Cf. Collier, ii. 38 *seqq.*

[3] See the Dedications to Heywood's *The English Traveller*, and his *A Maidenhead well Lost*; Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady* (i. 1 and iii. 4) and *The Sad Shepherd* (i. 2); Fletcher and Shirley's *The Night-Walker* (iii. 4); the mock Dedication of Shirley's *A Bird in a Cage*; the Dedication of Ford's *Love's Sacrifice*; and a passage in Mayne's *City-Match*.—So late as 1649 an unscrupulous wit attempted to revenge the stage upon its now powerful enemy by publishing a mock *Retractation* by the author of *Histriomastix*, which the latter had to declare 'a mere Forgery and imposture' by means of a public 'vin-

Its effect upon the theatre.

seem as if Prynne's attack had produced a feeling of anger not devoid of consolation (apart from that produced by his punishment). For the honour of the Queen had been, so to speak, identified with the cause of the theatre, and the hand of authority had fallen heavily upon the representative Puritan who was regarded as the assailant of both. During the brief period which remained for the stage before it was overwhelmed by the outbreak of the Revolution there are, however, signs of an improvement in the direction of propriety of tone which may doubtless in part at least be attributed to Prynne's invective[1].

The stage overwhelmed by the Revolution.

But the evil fortune which the adversaries of the stage desired for it was soon to avenge the sufferings of their champion. In 1639 the Scottish rebellion had in reality triumphed over the King; in 1640 he had once more—after eleven years of non-parliamentary government—summoned a Parliament and dismissed it less than a month after its meeting; and in the month of October of that year the High-Commission Court had held its last sitting at St. Paul's, and the people had torn up the benches to the cry of 'No Bishops! no High Commission!' By November the Parliament—the Long Parliament—had met; and Prynne was preferring a complaint to it of his treatment, and collecting evidence against Archbishop Laud. Well might the insignificant recipients of the royal favour, the members of a despised but hated profession, feel that their day also had come. 'Monopolers are downe,' says one of the two actors who in a mock Dialogue published in 1641[2] lament their 'sad and solitary conditions' (great sickness, and in some quarters the plague, had broken out in London[3], and the play-houses must

dication.' Both *Mr. William Prynn his Defence of Stage-Plays, or a Retractation of a former Book of his called Histrio-Mastix*, and Prynne's denial, are printed in Hazlitt, *u. s.—The Theatrum Triumphans . . . an Answer to Mr. Prins Histrio-Mastix*, said to have been written by Sir Richard Baker, was published in 1670.

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 363, as to some of D'Avenant's later pre-Restoration plays. Other plays of this period are above cavil on the score of impropriety—above all Denham's *The Sophy*, which was unusually successful. Cf. *ante*, p. 351.

[2] *The Stage-Players Complaint*, printed in Hazlitt, p. 253 *segq.*

[3] Forster, *The Grand Remonstrance*, p. 184.

have been temporarily closed), 'Projectors are downe, the High Commission Court is downe, the Starre-Chambre is down, and (some think) Bishops will downe, and why should we then that are farre inferior to any of those not justly feare, least we should be downe too.' This gloomy forecast was to be speedily verified. At Christmas 1641–2 only a single play was acted at Court, and both the King and the Queen were absent from the performance [1]. On the last day of February Charles I left the neighbourhood of London; and soon afterwards, in the Prologue to a play licensed in April—Shirley's *The Sisters* [2]—we hear that

> 'Our poet thinks the whole town is not well
> . . . . . .
> London is gone to York.'

The Register of the Master of the Revels closes in June with the ominous entry of a play called *The Irish Rebellion*, and 'here,' he adds, 'ended my allowance of plays, for the war began in August, 1642 [3].' So far as the stage was concerned, the catastrophe came rapidly enough; for on the 2nd of September was published the Ordinance of the Lords and Commons, which after a brief and solemn preamble commanded 'that while these sad causes and set-times of humiliation do continue, public stage-plays shall cease and be forborne [4].'

Theatres closed Sept. 2, 1642.

Of the broken remnants of life preserved by the theatre in the dark days which now ensued I shall very briefly speak at the beginning of my next chapter. Here it may be well to add a few words as to the condition in which our dramatic literature stood when overtaken by this eclipse, and as to some of the internal causes which had helped to bring its fate upon it.

In justice to the dramatists and to the stage of this period, it should be remembered that their difficulties

Circumstances affecting

[1] Collier, ii. 103.

[2] Cf. *ante*, p. 332. The Dedication of this play contains a striking picture of the desolation which soon befell the drama and its patrons.

[3] Collier, ii. 104.

[4] Collier, ii. 105; Hazlitt, p. 63.

dramatic productivity in this period.

were not confined to the task of attracting the public on which their prosperity depended, while seeking to conciliate the official authorities and to withstand a swelling tide of powerful hostility. A national theatre and drama have at all times to contend against influences not the less dangerous because they are to some extent themselves dramatic. Among these standing dangers is to be reckoned the competition of entertainments which borrow from the drama all the elements in it most directly attractive to the hungriest of organs, the eye,—of others which pride themselves on their aristocratic exclusiveness,—and of yet other kinds which revel unabashed in their broadly popular character. From the Masks and Triumphs at Court and at the great houses of the nobility, with their Olympuses and Parnassuses built by Inigo Jones and filled with goddesses and nymphs clad in the gold-spangled costumes designed by his inventive brain, to the City pageants and the fire-works and sea-fights on the patient Thames, from the tilts and tournaments at Whitehall to the more philosophical devices at the Inns of Court and the Latin plays at the Universities,—down even to the brief but thrilling theatrical excitements of Bartholomew Fair and the 'Nine-vitical motions[1]' of the inanimate drama,—the public of this period was tempted away from the true Thalia and Melpomene by rivals innumerable. And towards its close, the English theatre had even to compete with the more legitimate rivalry of foreign performers. The unfavourable reception of the French *actresses* filled the author of *Histriomastix* with pious gladness; but a second French company (consisting of men only) for a time established themselves in the very precincts of the palace. These French competitors were followed by Spanish; and though the notices of their presence happen to be contemporaneous with others of payments made by the King's orders to English actors, these payments were in part very tardy settlements of his obligations[2].

Competition of other entertainments,

and of foreign actors and actresses.

[1] Middleton's *Blurt, Master Constable* (i. 1).

[2] For details as to the visits of French actors, unsuccessful in 1629 but in 1635 settled for a time in the royal 'manage-house' as a theatre, see

Progress of the art of acting.

Over such permanent or temporary rivals the English drama was indeed certain to prevail, so long as it maintained itself as a living branch of the national literature, freshly offering through adequate hands a succession of healthy fruits. The noble art which, if true to its best ends, stands by the side of dramatic poetry as Automedon stood in the chariot by the side of Achilles, had in the great days of our drama animated its mightiest and sweetest creations. 'In this time,' says a dramatist of the next period, 'were poets and actors in their greatest flourish; Jonson and Shakespeare, with Beaumont and Fletcher, their poets, and Field and Burbadge, their actors[1].' And other evidence, which there is no reason to hold invalidated by the tendency of mankind to laud times past, shows that in the period 'before the wars' the art of acting at least maintained itself on the level to which it had been brought by Shakspere's associates and contemporaries, 'Burbadge, Heminge, and others of the older sort[2].' Gradually, however, the profession of the actor had become to a greater extent than formerly dissociated from that of dramatic authorship, though they were still (as in the instance of Field) occasionally combined; but this tendency towards a division of labour was, as in the case of most highly-developed pursuits, inevitable and in many respects advantageous. In the dramatists of this period—from Jonson *e.g.* at one end of the series to Shirley at the other—we find signs of a discriminating appreciation of artistic merit in actors. And the 'quality' itself was doubtless encouraged by the interest which it

Collier, ii. 24, 66 *seqq.* *Ib.*, p. 69, a performance by Spanish actors is mentioned as having taken place in December 1635. In this year the King appears to have settled some debts to various companies of English players—one debt among them of from nine to eleven years' standing.—The jealousy of the English stage against the French players may perhaps have given rise to a curious passage in ridicule of French acting in Glapthorne's *The Ladies' Privilege*, printed 1640 (act ii).

[1] R. Flecknoe, in his *Short Discourse of the English Stage*, printed 1664, quoted by Collier in his *Memoirs of the Principal Actors in the Plays of Shakespeare* (Shakesp. Soc. Publ., 1846), p. 211.

[2] See James Wright's *Historia Histrionica*, an interesting tract in the form of a dialogue on the history of the stage, printed in vol. xii of Dodsley's *Old Plays* (1780).

excited[1], by the esteem which the conduct of some of its most prominent members secured[2], and by the profitable returns which its pursuit under now well-established conditions might ensure[3], to set that high value on itself which accompanies and often helps to create the prosperity of a profession. Few could hope to die as munificent benefactors of the nation, like Edward Alleyn; but none needed to fear that, unless troublous times arrived, they would have to live or die without a fair measure of esteem from those whose esteem they prized. And when the troubles did come, most of the actors whom their years permitted, instead of slinking into Alsatia, 'went into the King's army, and, like good men and true, served their old master' in another capacity; and more than one of them fell on the field of honour[4].

The progress of the actor's art, there is every reason to believe, kept pace with the esteem in which its members were personally held. Actors learnt to value their own dignity, and to pay a corresponding respect to the works which it was their task to interpret. Plays no longer suffered at their hands for the benefit of the ground-

[1] Thus it was customary, already in the days of Alleyn and Kemp, for money to be staked in wagers on particular actors, 'that in the opinion of certain judges they would exceed particular rivals.' Collier, *Memoirs of Actors*, p. 42.

[2] 'All these companies,' says Trueman in *Historia Histrionica* after enumerating the principal houses of the period before the wars—the Blackfriars and the Globe (the King's), the Cockpit or Phoenix in Drury Lane (the Queen's), the Private House in Salisbury Street (the Prince's Servants), the Fortune near Whitecross Street, and the Red Bull at the upper end of St. John's Street—'(the two last mostly frequented by citizens, and the meaner sort of people),' 'got money, and lived in reputation, especially those of the Blackfriars, *who were men of grave and sober behaviour.*'

[3] Already in *The Returne from Pernassus* Kemp tells the two Cambridge students who seek instruction from him and Burbadge, 'you have happened upon the most excellent vocation in the world for money.' (Quoted by Collier, *Memoirs of Actors*, p. 31.) The system of shares gave a fixed proportion of profits, according to agreement, to all the players except the hired men; and was carefully observed in matters of detail. See Webster and Dekker's *A Cure for a Cuckold*, ii. 3, and Mr. Hazlitt's note. In Massinger's *The Picture* (ii. 1) the purchase of a share is treated as a step necessary to any one becoming an actor.

[4] *Historia Histrionica.*—The esteem in which the actor's art, when worthily exercised, was held by thoughtful men, is illustrated by Sir Thomas Overbury's *Character* of *An excellent Actor* (*temp.* James I).

lings; and the stage was purged from the 'barbarism' which in the days of Tarleton and Kemp had allowed popular favourites, instead of 'speaking to their co-actors in the scene,' to 'hold interlocutions with the audience [1].'

Women's parts acted by boys.

One very peculiar phenomenon of the English stage which this period still shared with its predecessors cannot be passed by in the present connexion. There is nothing which creates so strange an impression in reading numerous plays of this time—those of Beaumont and Fletcher in particular—as the remembrance of the fact that the women's parts were still invariably acted by boys. Little Solomon Pavy, Stephen Hammerton [2], young Field, and others doubtless drew tears as readily as any actress has done in later times; and in youthful characters better critics than the citizen's wife in Beaumont and Fletcher's burlesque may have had reason to appreciate the pleasing freshness of 'Master Moncaster's scholars [3]' and other performers of tender age. Moreover, habit goes for much in matters of this kind; nor was it more radically absurd for a boy to pour forth the sorrows of the Faithful Shepherdess, than it is for a female Orsino to sing the secret of masculine happiness. To us there is something revolting in the idea of so much passion and even licentiousness being put into the mouths of those to whose age the greatest reverence

[1] See the curious passage in Brome's *The Antipodes* (ii. 2). Modern Tarletons, it must be allowed, may urge the excuse which Letoy there makes for the old favourites, that they

> 'spent their wits, because
> The Poets were wise enough to save their own
> For profitabler uses.'

[2] *Historia Histrionica.*

[3] *i.e.* The Merchant Taylors' boys; see *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (i. 1). So Sarpego apprises the spectators of his mask (*The Gentleman Usher*, act ii) that

> 'women will ensue,
> Which I must tell you true,
> No women are indeed,
> But Pages made for need
> To fill up women's places,
> By virtue of their faces
> And other hidden graces.'

It may be worth noting that a comparatively low standard of age must have been usual for the heroines of the seventeenth-century love-plots.

was due; but the moral objections to be urged against many plays of this period are at all events not enhanced by the fact that up to a late date no women acted in them.

First appearances of actresses in England.

The Puritans objected to the acting of female characters by male performers on grounds all their own; they deemed it a plain offence against Scripture for one sex to put on the apparel of the other[1]. This of course by no means implied any approval of the performance of female characters by women. When in 1629 actresses made their first public appearance in England in the persons of French-women belonging to the company which visited London in that year, Prynne saluted them as 'monsters' rather than women; and in this instance the opinion of the theatrical audience coincided with that of the outside censor, for the strangers were 'hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted from the stage[2].' The next French company appears to have comprised no actresses; and the innovation was probably but little imitated on the English stage before the Restoration[3]. It is clear that it was considered open to grave doubts even by persons who were warm friends of the theatre[4]. At the same time it should be remembered—and the circumstance increases our surprise at the tardiness with which the practice was domesticated on the public stage in England—that in the masks at Court ladies constantly took part as performers; so that when in Christmas 1632–3 the Queen with her ladies acted in a Pastoral at Somerset House[5], there was no real novelty in the proceeding[6].

[1] Cf. the *Shorte Treatise against Stage-Playes* (1625), already cited.

[2] Collier, ii. 23 (from a contemporary letter addressed to Laud).

[3] That actresses were not altogether unknown to the stage of the times of Charles I would appear from a passage in Brome's *The Court-Beggar* (v. 2), cited by Morley, *First Sketch*, p. 636. Dyce's supposition (Shirley's *Works*, v. 353) that Mrs. Hughes was the first female performer on the English stage is therefore open to doubt. Colley Cibber, in his *Apology*, p. 76, roundly asserts that 'before the Restoration no Actresses had ever been seen upon the English Stage,' and the author of the *Historia Histrionica* seems to imply the same thing. It must, however, be concluded that a few experiments in this direction had been made before the closing of the theatres.

[4] See a curious passage in the mock *Mr. William Prynn His Defence of Stage-Plays* (1649), (printed in Hazlitt's collection), p. 270.

[5] Cf. *ante*, p. 415.

[6] The woman who speaks the Prologue to Shirley's *The Coronation* must

Scenery and costume.

With reference, finally, to the outward aids of scenery and costume, a progress from the extreme simplicity of the Elisabethan theatre is to be noted in this period. The history of the use of scenery on the English stage appears in its earlier phases to rest in obscurity; but the researches of Mr. Collier and others seem to show that by the close of the period under discussion, whether or not the primitive expedients for indicating locality had begun to be occasionally exchanged for scenery more or less appropriate to the place of action, changes of scene were no longer unusual, and were at times resorted to with considerable frequency[1]. So far from having the effect of increasing the tendency of the English drama to break up each act into a large number of scenes, the possibility of changing the scene must on the whole have inclined dramatists to think of accommodating the construction of their plays to the mechanical possibilities of their theatre. But that the entire arrangement of the stage, which so thoroughly facilitated a rapid and easy succession of scenes without any necessity for their being 'organically' connected with one another, remained essentially the same as in Shakspere's times, might easily be shown by an appeal to the whole character of the acting drama of his successors[2]. With

have been personated by an actor. 'A Female Prologue' even in this sense is described as 'a new trick' in the Prologue to Randolph's *Amyntas* (1640).

[1] See Collier, iii. 365 *seqq.*; and cf. Dyce's note to Fletcher's *Nice Valour*, iv. 1. Suckling's *Aglaura* has been said to have been 'the first play acted in England with scenes, such decorations having been previously confined to' masks. (Hazlitt's Introduction to Suckling's *Works*, p. xxxvii.) Scenes were regularly introduced by D'Avenant with the re-opening of the theatres (*vide infra*).

[2] I have no space to pursue this topic, which is by no means devoid of significance, in its details. I may refer the reader who is interested in it to a very suggestive article by Julian Schmidt in the *Preussische Jahrbücher* for September, 1874; where it is shown how the arrangement of the Shaksperean stage, as contrasted with that of Corneille, made possible a succession of scenes unconnected by so purely formal an expedient as that of making Socrates say (after concluding his communications to his confidant): 'But I see Critias coming, let us depart;' whereupon 'enter Critias.' Such a connexion, as the writer observes, is only nominally 'organic.' It is the result of an attempt to maintain that unity of place which, when contrived with an observance of Corneille's rule of '*la liaison des scènes*,' seemed so commendable to Dryden. See his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*.

reference to costume, as well as to the outward fitting-up of the stage, the public theatre of this period was doubtless anxious to follow to some extent the example set by the masks and the plays exhibited at Court. Inigo Jones, whose vigorous sketches enable us to form some conception of the figures which dazzled and diverted Whitehall, has left us at least two illustrations of the dress of dramatic characters at a time falling 'if not during the lifetime, very shortly after the decease of Shakespeare[1];' nor do I see any reason to conclude otherwise than that the stage of this period was fully alive to all that is really necessary in this branch of its economy.

The dramatists as appealing to their patrons.

Enough has been said to illustrate the nature of the outward conditions under which the dramatists of this period worked, and of the age for which they laboured and of which they formed part. Something might be added on the means which they employed for recommending themselves to the favour of individual patrons and to that of their chief patron the public. But it is of little importance to scan the tone and temper of Dedications, often of course inspired by sentiments of true gratitude, admiration, or friendship, but as often written for the customary fee[2]; or to enquire into the degree in which the Prologues and Epilogues varied from the customary appeal to the goodwill of the audience, accompanied by an assurance of the unobjectionable character of the play. If few of these dramatists were foolish enough in their generation to attempt to 'rail' their public 'into approbation' like Ben Jonson, or modest enough to furnish it with a candid estimate of their powers like Jonson's faithful servant Brome, they will not be judged harshly for the blindness they often seem to manifest towards the very defects in their plays which they most loudly disclaim. It was not till the next period of the drama that, especially in Dryden's

Dedications.

Prologues and Epilogues.

[1] See the plates to Cunningham's *Life of Inigo Jones*, with Mr. Planché's remarks (*Shakesp. Soc. Publ.*, 1848). The sketches in question are those of Romeo in the Pilgrim's dress (i. 5) and Jack Cade in 2 *Hen. VI.*

[2] It appears from the mock Dedication of Field's *A Woman is a Weathercocke* that the ordinary fee for these complimentary efforts was 40s.

hands, the use of the Prologue was to be elevated and intensified, and even that of the Epilogue seasoned, by something more than conventional eloquence and wit. An effort in this direction is already observable[1]; but it fails as yet to reach any generally notable height. These aids to success must as a rule be taken for not more than they are worth—like those Commendatory Verses which were a not unpleasing fashion of contemporary, and especially dramatic authorship, but which in many cases have to be counted rather than weighed in order to determine their value[2].

Summary of the literary history of the drama in this period.

It will be the task of the concluding chapter of this book to vindicate part of a position which it may here be permissible to assume. In the period following upon the Restoration, the signs of decline exhibited by our dramatic literature in the previous period were exchanged for signs of decay; and in still later periods this decay was succeeded by a not indeed unbroken, but to all appearance hopeless, stillness as of death. The present is therefore the point in my narrative where it seems most fitting to cast a retrospective glance upon the course which had been run and the results which had been accomplished by our dramatic literature in the period closing with the outbreak of the Great Civil War. All literary growths are, as has been already said, continuous; and even such an event as the closing of the theatres during half a generation could not prevent the drama on their re-opening from connecting its new course with the past. Like the Cavaliers who on their return in the days of King Charles II often discovered it to be no easy matter to recover

Nature of the change in the next period.

[1] Shirley refers to it in the Prologue to his *The Imposture* (1640):

'Since that poetic schism possess'd the age,
A prologue must have more wit than the play.'

Mayne in his *The City Match* (1639; v. 2) ridicules the

'buskin'd prologue, in
A stately, high, majestic motion, bare.'

[2] Chapman, in his *Byron's Conspiracy* (act iii), has a very striking passage, too long for quotation, on the inanity of commendatory tributes of this description.

possession of their estates, the dramatic literature of the Restoration found many new conditions of life awaiting it. But it is one thing to refuse to see any difference between a Shirley and a Wycherley, a Fletcher and a Congreve, a Massinger and an Otway,—and another to acknowledge that the influences and tendencies which produced decay were in many respects a consistent development of those which had led to decline.

Obvious errors traceable in the course of our dramatic literature in the period under review.

But in truth it is a narrow method of criticism which, in viewing as a whole the history of the drama of Elisabeth's later years and of the reigns of James I and Charles I, is contented with tracing in its errors causes of the coming downfall. These are written too clearly on its face to need a lengthy exposition. With an entire literary group, as with an individual writer, excess of activity in any one field of effort inevitably leads to exhaustion. The soil will refuse to bear an endless succession of good crops,—in time it will either have to lie fallow, or continue to produce at its peril. Our dramatic poets, far from husbanding their resources, expended them with reckless prodigality. Every dramatic form commending itself to the national genius and to the national sympathy was essayed. None were left aside except those of which English literature after the Restoration was incapable, and those which had from the first been purely artificial importations, favoured by the predilections of the Renascence. The mystery could not here, as in Spain, give birth to the *auto*, and the confines of the religious drama were only tentatively touched by a Massinger. The direct imitations of the Classical drama become few and feeble; Chapman, who naturally enough had a liking for its forms[1], made no serious attempt to reproduce its essentials; experiments like those of Stirling at the close of the Elisabethan age and that of Milton in the evening of his life are mere isolated efforts of independent students. The light and festive gaiety of the Italian and French farce, which connects the earliest ebullitions of French

Its excessive productivity in the national dramatic forms.

[1] The *Nuntius e. g.*, who appears in several of his plays (*The Blinde Beggar; Bussy d'Ambois; Caesar and Pompey*).

comic genius in a direct line with the first productions of Molière, could never and will never establish itself among ourselves without more solid adjuncts; nor could the French tastes of the days of Henrietta Maria, any more than those of the days of Charles II afterwards, completely teach our dramatists the art to trifle[1]. The forms which the drama of the period under review left for its successors to attempt were either bastard imitations of uncongenial foreign growths, or loose and fragmentary efforts. With the exception of the opera, the modern pantomime, and the modern farce—and a few more ephemeral extravagances—the pre-Restoration drama included every dramatic form which has proved capable of domesticating itself in the national literature and on the national stage; and in many of these forms exhausted its strength in excessive productivity.

Certain national species neglected.

The national historical drama.

But its choice of forms was not throughout directed by a clear insight into the special capabilities of our national dramatic literature. Thus our dramatists in the former half of the seventeenth century failed steadily to develope that species which, if assiduously cultivated, might have kept their art in full and vital connexion with the main tide of the national life. Under influences partly of course beyond their control they abandoned creative efforts in the direction of the national historical drama after it had reached in Shakspere a standard high indeed, but not that of a perfection defying competition. They left this noble branch of their art—with few exceptions, such as Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*—to

[1] It is amusing to find Thomas Heywood, certainly one of the most typically English among the later Elisabethan dramatists, insist upon the solidity of the English drama as its distinctive characteristic:

> 'Those [dramas] that frequent are
> In Italy and France, even in these days,
> Compar'd with ours, are rather jigs than Plays:
> Like of the Spanish may be said, and Dutch,—
> None versed in language but confess them such.
> They do not build their projects on that ground,
> Nor have their phrases half the weight and sound
> Our laboured Scenes have had.'
>
> Prologue to *A Challenge for Beauty* (printed 1636).

wither away. Only those who, like Thomas Heywood or Samuel Rowley, at times purposely addressed themselves to the boisterous sympathies of imperfectly cultivated audiences, affected together with the subjects the forms of the old Chronicle History—and being by design old-fashioned were in effect retrograding[1]. Of the rest, some turned to efforts cognate with the national historical drama in treating themes from the history of nations in moral or intellectual sympathy with their own, or possessing for it a more than passing interest. But even here the mantle of the author of *Bussy d'Ambois* and *Byron* remained almost unclaimed, and the learning displayed by Jonson in his Roman tragedies lay like an incubus upon his successors. They preferred to feed their imaginations, not with the solid matter of De Thou or Tacitus, but with the thinner substance of romantic fiction. Italian, Spanish, and French intrigues, Byzantine and Persian court-plots, British legend steeped in the false colours of French romance, formed a range of themes seemingly endless in their abundance, but in reality narrow, for the efforts of tragic poetry. But the historical drama proper was dead; and tragedy was gradually passing towards the artificialities of the heroic plays of the Restoration and the pseudo-classical efforts of a still later period.

The higher kind of historical drama in general.

Impoverishment of the tragic drama.

In comedy the contact remained closer between the national drama and the national life. Here again Shakspere, though he had accomplished so much, had not closed the door against further progress. He, the unrivalled master of comic as of tragic characterisation, had only begun the work of creating an English comedy of character[2]. It was in this direction that the genius of

Comedy of character gives way to comedy of manners.

[1] Already Chapman in *A Humorous Day's Mirth* (printed 1599) can laugh at the 'old-fashioned plays,' in which the king sits 'having his wife, his counsel, his children, and his fool about him, to whom he will sit and point very learnedly as followeth:

'My counsel grave, and you my noble peers,
My tender wife and you, my children dear,
And thou my fool.'

(Act i *ad in.*)

[2] Cf. vol. i. pp. 493 *seqq.*

Jonson achieved its greatest victories; but his consciousness of his aims at times interfered with his freedom of workmanship, and he lacked, especially in his later productions, the serenity, the buoyancy, the gaiety of mind which Thalia bestows as enduring gifts upon her lifelong favourites. His contemporaries and successors were less intent than he upon that study of men fortified by the study of books—that comparative study, in a word, of human nature—which leads most surely to the production of new literary types of character. With all their inventiveness, and their in many cases superior advantages of experience in particular spheres of life, they were too prone to fasten their attention upon the devising of ingenious plots and diverting situations instead of the exploration of the realm of character. Their observation confined itself to the surface instead of penetrating to the substance; and while assiduously depicting numerous varieties of manners, they reproduced, with what to us may well seem wearisome reiteration, a limited series of types—to which only here and there a Dekker, a Chapman, a Massinger added one really new. This series is indeed wider than that of the new Attic, and its heirs Latin and Italian comedy, but it is far from inexhaustible, and with its self-repetitions must occasionally have produced the effect of sameness even upon the generation whose tastes it sought to meet[1].

Tendency to rhetorical superficiality

The enormous fertility of our dramatic literature within the range of species to which it confined itself—a fertility which increased with the progress of time and at last attained to almost incredible proportions[2]—must have led, if not necessarily to a deterioration of style, at least to a tendency towards those forms of style which

[1] 'Such a citizen
As the plays flout still [*i.e.* constantly], and is made the subject
Of all the stages.'
Field, *A Woman is a Weathercocke* (ii. 1).

[2] According to *Histriomastix*, who appeals to information received from 'Stationers,' above forty thousand play-books had been printed within the two years preceding the composition of the treatise. (See the *Epistle Dedicatory to the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn.*)

most easily lend themselves to rapid production. This is one of the reasons, though by no means the only one, accounting for the rhetorical note which is so characteristic of the tragic as well as the comic drama of this period. Of all tendencies which rapid production must more or less discourage, the tendency to what the Germans call *Verticfung* is least to be sought for here; in its place declamation for declamation's sake in serious, and railing for railing's sake[1] in comic passages, becomes a constant resource; and the very desire for ease in the conditions of production revenges itself by a growing artificiality of manner—one of the surest signs of decline. If, on the other hand, in those creations which seem more directly inspired by the breath of poetic fancy, we miss the airy lightness and the upward impulse of Shakspere's most enchanting creations, if the wings of their imaginative genius seem unable to lift even a Fletcher or a Shirley in their happiest moments wholly away from the surroundings of a less transparent atmosphere, this is not to be exclusively ascribed either to the nature of their own powers or to the force of circumstances. The curse of conventionality rested more especially on direct endeavours to rescue for the regular drama part of the domain occupied by purely artificial growths, such as the mask and the pastoral drama; the features of the same model reappear in a succession of works; and fancy seems never less free than when she is seeking to escape from the world of the real.

and conventional artificiality in style.

Finally, there is a degeneracy far from uniform in degree, but unmistakeably characterising the dramatic literature of this period as a whole, in the moral tone of its productions. That this element in works of art is foreign to the question of their value as such, may be the opinion of some critics. But whoever will consider the history of any artistic growth as a whole within limits coincident with

Degeneration in moral tone.

[1] Already Chapman makes his Claudio say in *All Fools* (act ii),

> 'Faith, that same vein of railing is become
> Now most applausive; your best Poet is
> He that rails grossest.'

those of a national life, will I think arrive at a contrary result. As surely as in the history of Greek sculpture (which it is possible to survey with some relative completeness) a succession of moral phenomena in Greek life reflect themselves with unmistakeable distinctness, so in the history of our drama from the days of the early Elisabethans to those of the contemporaries of the Restoration may be traced the sway and the decline of moral influences discernible in the general course of the national life. It would be both rash and feeble to speak of the drama of the reigns of James and Charles as reflecting a social life devoid of ideals of virtue both public and private; it would be equally futile to ignore the wide difference observable in the predominant moral tone of Massinger and of Fletcher, or of Shirley and of Ford. But the growing apathy in particular spheres of society towards some of the most important aspects of both public and domestic life is a sign of the dramatic literature of these times as well as of the times themselves. Personally, Marlowe may have been more impatient of restraint than Ford, but is it possible to conceive of the former writing with that cold contempt for the power of moral forces which in the latter shocks the mind far more than the wildest delirium of animal passion? Shakspere himself has left us no proof that he had realised the highest ideal of free civic virtue; about his Brutus, which approaches nearest to such a conception, there is a half-rhetorical, half-elegiac haze; but neither he nor his times had approached the level of Fletcher and the society for which he wrote—where it seems impossible for a man to draw his breath freely, or to think of a prince otherwise than as a despot, benevolent or malevolent, but a despot in either case.

This decline of moral sentiment not hopeless.

Yet the dramatic literature of this age (and the rest of its literature furnishes materials for the same conclusion) had not yet reached that extreme of moral weakness which only a period of reaction against restraint is wont to exhibit. There are a few signs, but only a very few, of a tendency to take conscious delight in the absence of lofty

ideals, to glory in the inversion of right and wrong, to sneer at the impotence of virtue, and exult in the supremacy of vice. Indeed, far from displaying so deadly a progress of decay, our dramatic literature, like the society which reflects itself in it, shows signs of recovery in the later part of this period in the moral tone of its productions; and the reaction might have assumed even more unmistakeable proportions, had it not been lost in the waves of a far mightier movement.

Influence of foreign dramatic literatures probably slight as a whole:

What our drama in this period achieved, is not wholly to be ascribed to the self-determining and self-renewing powers of a flourishing national developement. Its general course, as well as the creative activity of its individual authors, was no doubt in some measure affected, in this as in all other periods, by the influence of foreign examples. How far this influence extended is a question to which different answers will be given, and which others are better qualified to decide than myself. But after such consideration as I have been able to give to the subject, I am bound to express my conviction that, except in the case of merely subsidiary and secondary growths,—such as above all the pastoral drama, of which I am not here speaking,—no foreign dramatic literature in this period exercised any really vital influence upon the progress of the English. Far too much importance has been perhaps attached to the coincidence in subject, and even in particulars of treatment, between individual English and foreign plays. Thus it need not be denied that Italian tragedy now as formerly sometimes supplied at first hand plots and even characters to English dramatists, while of course both they and their Italian contemporaries constantly resorted to Italian prose fiction—in its native or translated form—for their materials. But Italian tragedy, partly under the influence of the new growths just referred to, partly from a timid adherence to classical models, sank into decline more rapidly than her English sister, though, unlike the latter, she was to experience a new birth in a later century. Italian comedy, while exercising a fertilising influence by the living examples of its loose

Italian.

popular form—the *commedia dell' arte*—had in its professedly literary branch—the *commedia erudita*—gradually emancipated itself from the rules of classical examples, without producing in its assiduously cultivated field any works of high comic genius[1]. The most direct traces of its influence upon the English drama of this period are probably to be sought for in the academical plays, which addressed themselves to audiences comparable to the literary societies forming the real home and birth-place of the Italian comedies of this age. French tragedy was still more consistently than Italian clinging to the traditions of classical form, even when, as in the remarkable political dramas which accompanied the great civil struggles of the close of the sixteenth century, it sought to bring itself into immediate relations with the times. The struggle between the already nationalised classical tragedy and the romantic drama was still in progress; but the end—the victory of the former—was already drawing near, in spite of the access of vitality derived by the latter from the influences of the Italian pastoral and the vigorous growth of the Spanish drama[2]. French comedy was better able to retain its essentially national character. But neither the classicising school of French tragedy, whose sway was soon to be definitively established by Corneille, nor the long-lived growth of French farce, could directly influence a dramatic literature which, like our own, no longer presented points of contact with the tendencies they respectively represented. It was only at a later period, when the English drama was turning aside from the traditions of its own past, that it could be immediately influenced, as we shall see it was, by French examples.

The French.

The really predominating dramatic literature of the earlier half of the sixteenth century on the continent of Europe was however neither the Italian nor the French, but the Spanish. It might be shown that this was partly the result of causes extending far beyond the activity of a particular literary developement. From Spain proceeded

The Spanish.

[1] Cf. Sismondi, *Lit. of the South of Europe*, chap. xv.

[2] Cf. Ebert, *Entwicklungsgesch. d. franz. Tragödie*, pp. 176 *seqq.*

in the sixteenth century—though the close of the fifteenth was its real seed-time—that great spiritual and intellectual movement which is but imperfectly designated under the name of the Catholic Reaction. For it was something more than a reaction against the Protestant Reformation which lay at the root of a movement which would be more appropriately termed a revival; which completely mastered the tendencies of the Italian Renascence; and which, if it ended by becoming the servant of Rome, had in the first instance transformed the spirit of Rome herself[1]. But these considerations lie beyond my present subject. The great age of the Spanish drama was one of the last births of this great national movement, and accompanies like an after-glow the period when that movement had already passed into its last and least spiritual phase. In this relation lies one of the causes explaining the artificiality of the Spanish drama, which its brilliancy is unable to conceal. Thus—strangely and yet intelligibly enough—the higher and more important national impulses which gave rise to the flower of Spanish dramatic literature, and which the latter so unmistakeably reveals, were not those which—speaking generally—it communicated to other European literatures; and while it furnished numberless suggestions to these in matters of detail, no drama has ever remained so exclusively national, and accordingly exercised so small a really vital influence upon foreign dramatic growths, as the Spanish.

It is necessary for me to speak on this subject with diffidence, inasmuch as my own acquaintance with Spanish dramatic literature is only derived through translations, or at second-hand. Yet, even so, I have little hesitation in asserting that the connexion between the Spanish and the English drama in this period, which is sometimes assumed to have been so intimate, will, the more it is enquired into, be found to reduce itself to a narrow range of indebtedness on the part of our writers. A narrow range—but one extending through a long series of details similar

[1] See an exposition of this view in Maurenbrecher's *Studien und Skizzen der Reformationszeit.*

to one another. To the English, as to the French and Italian drama of the seventeenth and even the eighteenth century, the prolific Spanish dramatists of the close of the sixteenth and the seventeenth supplied a whole arsenal of 'plots, incidents, and situations[1].' Several instances of this description have been noted in the preceding pages, particularly in the case of works by Beaumont and Fletcher[2]. More could no doubt be added by those able to examine the less as well as the better known of Lope de Vega's Spanish contemporaries. A few characters too may have been taken by our English dramatists directly from Spanish originals. But — apart from the considerations that in many instances a Spanish novel[3] and not a drama is ascertainably the original source, and that in many other instances the loan may have been only indirectly made — the important point is this: that among the elements *peculiar* to the Spanish drama there are none which our own can be shown to have taken over and assimilated to its own growth. So long as this position remains unassailable, so long as it cannot be contended that our drama would have assumed different forms from those which it did assume, had no dramatic work of Cervantes or Lope or Calderon ever reached our shores, so long as no specifically Spanish origin can be ascribed to any important comic type, to any prominent tragic character, to any species of comic or tragic form in the English drama of this period — its claims to originality remain from this point of view unimpaired. In other words — borrowed from a critic already quoted — the obligations with respect to incident and intrigue on the part of our dramatists towards their Spanish contemporaries and predecessors no more detract from the poets' merits 'than

[1] Cf. Lewes, *The Spanish Drama*, chap. i. See also Sismondi, chap. xxxv, and Ticknor, chap. xxvi.

[2] Also Middleton and Webster.

[3] Dryden, in the Preface to his *An Evening's Love* (founded on a play by Calderon), where he enumerates instances of borrowed plots, says that 'Beaumont and Fletcher had most of theirs from Spanish novels,' and mentions several examples. This seems to imply that Dryden did not suppose Beaumont and Fletcher to have largely borrowed directly from Spanish *plays*.

the adoption of plots from the Italian novelists detracts from Shakspere's wonderful invention[1].' At all events, the *onus probandi* lies with those who have as yet failed to show cause for the antecedently improbable supposition that a drama at once so national and so artificial as the Spanish could have in essentials affected another dramatic growth not so exclusively but as genuinely national as itself.

Mutual indebtedness of the English dramatists in non-essentials.

If our dramatists without hesitation borrowed their plots, or parts of their plots, from foreign sources, they were equally unscrupulous in their use of materials nearer of access. In fact, they recognised no right on the part of any one author to elements which he might or might not have himself derived from sources open to all; and though herein they may have at times exceeded the liberty which if rightly understood every author possesses, they do not appear seriously to have begrudged one another the right of borrowing what are after all the non-essentials of dramatic originality[2]. The constant co-operation of two or more authors in the composition of single works, of which it is needless to recur to examples, must have frequently rendered the identification of 'property in ideas' of this description extremely difficult; and doubtless modern commentators have often wasted their labour — and at times their indignation — upon the detection of 'reminiscences' or 'plagiarisms' to which the victims themselves would have been supremely indifferent.

Summary of the achievements of our dramatic literature

It remains to cast one concluding glance upon the achievements of our national English drama in the period from the close of Elisabeth's reign to the outbreak of the Great Revolution. Its annals in this age include, together

[1] Lewes, p. 8. The debts to the Spaniards of our dramatists in the period after the Restoration will be briefly considered in my next chapter.

[2] The practice is not very wrathfully alluded to by Middleton (himself variously supposed to have either perpetrated or suffered from a 'reminiscence' of a less wholesale kind) in *The Spanish Gipsy* (ii. 2):

'*San.* We'll invoke together, so you will not steal my plot.
Rod. 'Tis not my fashion.
San. But now-a-days 'tis all the fashion.'

with numerous names relatively insignificant, many illustrious in the history of our poetic literature. Nothing would be more futile than to attempt to range these in order of merit, after the childish fashion in which Byron amused himself by constructing pyramidal lists of his poetic contemporaries. Moreover, the sign of original genius is its distinctiveness; and no comparison of this kind could weigh in opposite scales the brilliancy of Fletcher and the intensity of Webster, the irresistible gaiety of Middleton and the seductive sweetness of Ford. The later Elisabethan dramatists and their after-growth of the next age could not indeed themselves fail to look up to a few names as holding an undisputed pre-eminence. Thus Webster, in a passage already cited[1], singles out the 'full and heightened style' of Chapman, the 'laboured and understanding works' of Jonson, and the 'no less worthy composures' of Beaumont and Fletcher as the first objects of his admiration, but in naming after these Shakspere and Dekker and Heywood, he guards himself against any imputation of a desire to detract from their deserts. If in this passage, written in or before the year 1612, we cannot recognise either a complete or a wholly judicious appreciation of contemporary merit, it proves at least a desire on the part of one dramatist, himself of singular excellence in a limited range of creations, to render justice to various kinds of poetic genius. We cannot therefore, even while wondering at Webster's blindness to the pre-eminence of one whom he classes *inter pares*, do better than imitate the general spirit of his tribute. Among Shakspere's contemporaries and successors there is but one who by the energy of his genius not less than by the circumstances of his literary career stands in a position of indisputable primacy among his fellows. Jonson, to whom a whole generation of younger dramatists readily did homage as their veteran chief, was alone in sober truth the founder of a school or family—in the old Greek artists' acceptation of the idea—of dramatists. But his influence in this direction was in the first instance due to the earnest consciousness

in this period.

Acknowledged pre-eminence of a few great writers.

The influence of Jonson.

[1] From the address *To the Reader* prefixed to *Vittoria Corombona*.

with which he through life addressed himself to the cultivation of his art; so that there was truth as well as humour in the self-assertion put into his mouth by one of the youngest and most talented of his followers, who represents him as 'plainly telling' the assembled poets of the age, how

> 'he deserv'd the Bays,
> For his were called Works, where others were but Plays[1].'

Achievements of Jonson and his contemporaries and successors in historic tragedy.

Yet Jonson's pre-eminence, whatever his followers may have thought, was not one which extended to both branches of the regular drama. He indeed essayed, with equal ardour of effort, the tragic as well as the comic drama. But his achievements in the former—the branch of our dramatic literature in this period on which I will first touch—fell short of the highest success. Such as they are, his tragic efforts, together with those of Chapman and an isolated work by Ford, stand virtually alone in this period as examples of sustained effort in the field of historic tragedy proper. But the merits of these creations, though both many and varied, failed to give vitality to one of the noblest of dramatic growths. The excursions made by Thomas Heywood and others into the still popular domain of the Chronicle History are retrogressions and nothing more. With the great body of the dramatists of this and the next period tragedy had passed into the phase where its interest depends mainly upon its situations, where novelty is therefore a necessary element in the plot, and where the arrangement of incident is the primary task of the dramatist. The romantic tragedies and so-called tragi-comedies[2] which fill our literature from Dekker to Fletcher, and from Webster to Shirley, constitute together a growth of at first sight astonishing exuberance. The sources from which their subjects were derived had constantly increased in number and variety.

Historic tragedy neglected for romantic tragedy and 'tragi-comedy.'

Variety of subjects,

[1] See Suckling's *A Sessions of the Poets.*

[2] The sense in which this term is generally used in literary criticism is that of plays freely mingling tragic and comic scenes, characters and interest; but the narrower sense in which it is generally employed by the dramatists of this period is that of a play serious in its main interest but ending happily.

Besides Italian, Spanish, and French fiction, original or translated,—a store-house comprehensive enough to include Cervantes and Honoré d'Urfé,—and besides such native literary sources as Sidney's *Arcadia*, the contemporary foreign, especially the Spanish, drama offered occasional opportunities for resort. And, in addition to these, a new series of materials was at hand since our dramatists had begun to regard events and episodes of English domestic life as fit subjects for tragic treatment. Domestic tragedy of this description was indeed no novelty on the English stage; Shakspere himself may not improbably have touched with his master-hand more than one effort of the kind; but Thomas Heywood may be regarded as the first who achieved any work of considerable literary value in this field, in which he was followed by Middleton and others. Yet in contrast to this wide variety of sources, and consequent apparent variety of themes, the number of *motives* employed—at least as a rule—in the tragic drama of this period was comparatively small and limited. Hence it is that, notwithstanding the diversity of subjects among the tragic dramas of such writers as Marston, Webster, Fletcher, Ford, and Shirley, an impression of sameness is left upon us by a connected perusal of these works. This impression is largely, though not wholly, attributable to the constant recurrence of the same motives—such as politic ambition, conjugal jealousy, absolute female devotion, unbridled masculine passion—in plays of which the time and locality are so infinitively various. Another cause leading to the same result is the want of moderation which these dramatists and their contemporaries so habitually exhibit in the treatment of the passions employed by them as the favourite motives in the conduct of their tragic actions. A celebrated critic[1] has remarked with incontestable truth —though it is obvious how easily the observation lends itself to dangerous misinterpretation—that 'passions only vary and differ from one another when they are moderated; it is then that each has its own language and gesture; it

and comparative paucity of motives.

Excess of passion.

[1] See the chapter *De l'Émotion Dramatique* in St.-Marc Girardin's *Cours de Litt. Dram.*, vol. i. p. 8.

is then that they interest by their diversity. When they are excessive, they become uniform; and exaggeration, which is supposed to be a way of bringing a passion into greater relief, in fact effaces and destroys it.' All the tragic poets of this period are not equally amenable to this charge; and in Webster, and in Ford more especially, the sameness of exaggerated passion is broken by those marvellously sudden and subtle touches by which their tragic genius creates its most striking effects. Nor will the tendency to excess of passion which Beaumont and Fletcher undoubtedly exhibit be confounded with their distinctive power of sustaining tenderly pathetic characters and situations in a degree unequalled by any of their contemporaries. Massinger's dignity of sentiment and Shirley's gift of poetic illustration come less into question here, as these qualities, though respectively among the most salient characteristics of these writers, are of less intrinsic importance to their general conception of tragic art. The common features of the romantic tragedy of this period (as we may fairly call it) are, on the one hand, ingenuity in the choice and facility in the construction of plots, a control over incident to which the earlier drama had been a stranger, a flow of impassioned diction adequate to full and long-sustained actions—on the other, a certain poverty in the choice of motives (evident to any one who will from this point of view compare Shakspere's successors with Shakspere himself), a monotony of pitch in the treatment of different kinds of passions, and—it must be added—a sameness in the constant use of particular devices in the conduct of their intrigues[1].

Distinctive merits and defects common to the romantic tragedies of this period.

In comedy the genius and the insight of Jonson had pointed the way to a steady and legitimate advance. His theory of 'humours,' translated into the language of dra-

Examples of Jonson and Shakspere in comedy.

[1] In comedy Chapman had (see his *May-Day*) at an early point in this period (1611) condemned 'transformances' as 'the stale refuge of miserable Poets;' but there was one transformance—by means of doublet and hose—of which English tragedy and comedy alike never tired, and which they left to future generations of dramatists as a doubtful heritage—doubtful in spite of the consecration which it had received from its use by Shakspere and in an early master-piece of Beaumont and Fletcher.

matic art, signified the paramount importance in the comic drama of the creation of distinctive human types. It may seem as if a limit in this direction were possible, but such will not be thought the case, if the experience of the comic drama and of comic fiction in the history of the world at large be called into remembrance. Jonson—and Shakspere—had therefore, while showing the way, not at the same time closed the gate upon progress on the part of their contemporaries and successors. Yet in this, the highest field of a comic dramatist's labours, Jonson was only occasionally rivalled by any of his fellows or followers in individual instances, while in general creative power in this direction none even approached him. On the other hand, the favourite types of Jonsonian comedy, to which Dekker and Chapman had indisputably, though to no large extent, added others of their own, were elaborated with incessant zeal and remarkable effect by their contemporaries and successors. It was after a very different fashion than that in which the Roman comedians reiterated the ordinary types of the New Comedy, that the inexhaustible *verve* of Middleton, the buoyant productivity of Fletcher, the observant humour of Field, and the artistic versatility of Shirley—not to mention other names—mirrored in innumerable pictures of contemporary life the undying follies and foibles of mankind. As comedians of manners more than one of these surpassed the old master, not indeed in distinctness and correctness, but in lightness accompanied by sureness of touch; while in the construction of plots the access of abundant new materials, and the greater elasticity in treatment which is the result of so fertile an artistic developement, likewise enabled them to maintain what may I think be described as a steady progress. Thus, without any wish to lose sight of the vices and defects which the comedy of this period handed down to be aggravated by its successor, it may be asserted that our comic dramatic literature from Jonson to Shirley is unsurpassed as a comedy of manners, while as a comedy of character it at least defies comparison with any other national literary growth preceding or

Comic types of character elaborated, and new types occasionally added.

Progress in comedy of manners.

contemporaneous with it. Its weaknesses, like those of every literary movement which suffers from fulness of blood, are most painfully apparent in its lesser writers, where they have not, as in the case of honest Brome, carefully schooled themselves into a judicious knowledge of their own capacities; but whatever examples may be chosen purposely or at haphazard to illustrate the progress of its decline, it cannot be justly said, even within the limits which it had failed materially to enlarge, to have exhausted its vitality before the Revolution.

The Pastoral Drama and the Mask.

To the subsidiary developement of the Pastoral Drama and to the hybrid growth of the Mask I need not here return. In both of these species many of our dramatists found special opportunities for the exercise of those lyrical gifts which on occasion in the regular drama likewise shine forth with so brilliant or so gentle and soft a light. On

Verse

the general subject of the progress of English dramatic versification in this period it is to be hoped that a more detailed comparison than can be here attempted will throw continually increasing light. There is perhaps no other aspect of our dramatic literature in which individuality so strikingly exhibits its power even under the influence of generally prevalent tendencies. It is difficult *e.g.* to conceive of Fletcher adopting any form of blank-verse except that which he made his own, and which seems almost as truly a part of him as his morality. In the later dramatists of this period less mannerism of versification is perceptible than in some of the earlier; but it is not too much to say that it is in those writers who like Shirley show the fullest sense of the value of their art that we shall find the most care for its outward form. In the lesser dramatists of the close of Charles I's reign we find a looseness of versification which shows how easily familiarity passes into contempt, and how want of character reflects itself already in the mere outward form of

and prose in the dramatic literature of this period.

an art. Prose had been conquered for the drama in an earlier period; and nothing was here needed but to maintain an established right, which comedy was not likely to relinquish. Obvious causes prevented dramatic prose from

adopting the peculiar colouring characteristic of so much of the political and religious literature and oratory of the period. On the other hand, the condensed and pregnant phraseology of the stage, as specially developed under the influence of the Jonsonian comedy of character, communicated itself to that essay-literature of the age which, as represented by an Overbury, an Earle, even a Bacon, offers so many points of contact with the drama.

Conclusion.

One word in conclusion, as we part from the cluster of names, great and small, which the annals of our dramatic literature have preserved to us as those of Shakspere's contemporaries and more immediate successors. With him, these men shared the effects of the electrical contact between mind and mind—sometimes between genius and genius—and the impulse to creative activity which it begets. Like him and like his predecessors they were subject to the influence of their times, while many of them could not but be affected by the examples of those who were their masters as well as their fellows. They cannot therefore be fully understood or duly valued unless account is taken of their connexion with one another, with their contemporaries and predecessors, with Shakspere himself; and to study them individually is only part of the task of such as desire to estimate them justly. But the conscientious study of individual genius is the beginning, as the sympathetic appreciation of it is the end, of literary criticism. 'We wish,' says Goethe, 'to be less praised and more frequently read.' The meed of popular fame may be safely left to adjust itself; the task of the literary student is to examine with his own eyes, and to trust in the light which will in time make clear to him the difference between genius and its accidents.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LATER STUART DRAMA.

The stage during the Civil War period,

THE fatal Ordinance of the Lords and Commons, bearing date September 2, 1642, had declared that 'while these sad causes and set-times of humiliation do continue, stage-plays shall cease and be forborne[1].' Once more bishops and players were fellows[2], as in the old Mar-prelate days; but this time Martin had the uppermost. Many actors and playwrights followed the fortunes of the royal cause in the field; some may have gone into a more or less voluntary exile[3]; upon those who lingered on in the familiar haunts of London the hand of power lay heavy; and if their voice was not wholly mute, their complaints could only be addressed to an imaginary tribunal[4]. We possess no certain information as to the Parliamentary Ordinance having been infringed in more than one instance, when a performance of Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* was promptly stopped by the in-

[1] Collier, ii. 105; Hazlitt, *The English Drama and Stage*, p. 63.

[2] 'But Times are chang'd; and it is worth our note,
Bishops and Players both suffer'd in one vote.'
Alexander Brome, *Upon the Ingenious Comedies of Mr. Richard Brome* (R. Brome's *Works*, i. viii).

[3] The probability that some English actors during this period endeavoured to earn their living by acting abroad is supported by the circumstance that an English comedian is mentioned at Vienna in 1654. See Karajan, *Abraham a Sancta Clara*, p. 113, note.

[4] See *The Actors' Remonstrance* of January 1643 (printed in Hazlitt, *u. s.*, pp. 259 *seqq.*), in which a complaint is preferred to 'great Phoebus' and the 'Sacred Sisters' that stage-plays are prohibited, while 'the exercise at the Beares Colledge and the motions of the Puppets' are 'still in force and vigour.'

terference of civic authority. There seems however reason to believe that dramatic entertainments of one kind or another were occasionally presented; for in 1647 the Houses followed up their previous Ordinance with another (dated October 22), giving summary powers to magistrates against any players proved on the evidence of two witnesses to have acted in any of the London play-houses[1]. An attempt was, however, made in the winter of 1647–8 to produce some plays at the Cockpit; but after three or four days' performances the actors were surprised by a party of soldiers in the middle of Fletcher's *The Bloody Brother*, and temporarily imprisoned[2]. On February 9, 1648, a final Ordinance was therefore passed declaring all stage-players rogues and subject to punishment accordingly,—authorising the Lord Mayor, Justices of the Peace, and Sheriffs to pull down all stage-galleries, seats, and boxes,—appropriating all money collected at surreptitious performances for the benefit of the poor,—and inflicting a fine (of five shillings) upon every one found present on such an occasion[3]. One or two interventions of authority were actually necessary against the incorrigible vitality of the theatre; and both Parliament and Common Council having themselves been subjected to processes of a steadying tendency before this year 1648 was out, the policy of suppression, in so far as the theatre was concerned, proved upon the whole successful for a time.

So Protean an adversary as the drama had however more than one resource in its flexibility. It contrived to retain a certain hold upon the lower orders by means of the performance, under various pretexts, of comic portions of various plays, which took place at the Red Bull, and at fairs in town and country. These farces or 'drolls' (as they were called) were mostly contrived by an actor of the name of Robert Cox, who was likewise the principal performer in them[4]. 'In Oliver's time' private perform- and the Protectorate.

[1] Collier, ii. 111; Hazlitt, 64.

[2] Wright's *Historia Histrionica*.

[3] Collier, ii. 113; Hazlitt, 66.

[4] See Dyce, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Works*, i. 200.—A collection of these Droll-Humours' was afterwards (1672) published by the bookseller Kirkman,

D'Avenant's devices.

ances took place at noblemen's houses—in particular at Holland House in Kensington—and judiciously applied bribes occasionally even made performances possible at the Red Bull, but some of these were 'disturb'd by soldiers[1].' In 1656 the ingenuity of Sir William D'Avenant ventured upon a bolder step. He applied for, and obtained, permission to produce (at 'the back part of Rutland House' in Aldersgate Street) an entertainment of declamation and music 'after the manner of the ancients;' and it was actually produced there on May 21. This curious substitute for the real thing—which only in its concluding words ventured to hint at the desirability of the real thing itself[2]—was succeeded in the same year, and at the same place, by D'Avenant's *Siege of Rhodes*, 'made a Representation by the Art of Prospective in

under the title of *The Wits, or Sport upon Sport*, which has several times been referred to in this work. It contains several scenes from Beaumont and Fletcher, one from *Hamlet*, and one from *The Alchemist*;—the choice being obviously always determined by the thought of what is likely to please an audience of the lowest kind.

[1] Wright's *Historia Histrionica*; cf. Geneste, i. 23.

[2] The entertainment (printed in D'Avenant's *Dramatic Works*, vol. iii) began with a 'concert of instrumental music.' Then follows an argumentative dialogue between 'Diogenes, the cynic' and 'Aristophanes the poet' sitting 'in two gilded rostras' on the subject of public amusements—especially the diversions of music and scenery. The curtains having been closed, more instrumental and vocal music ensued. To this succeeds a Dialogue between a Parisian and a Londoner, clad 'in the livery-robes of both cities,' concerning the pre-eminence of Paris or London. The Londoner's harangue was prefaced by 'a concert of music, imitating the waits of London.' This Dialogue, which has some antiquarian interest, closes with a song of which I cannot help quoting the first verse:

'London is smother'd with sulph'rous fires;
Still she wears a black hood and cloak
Of sea-coal smoke,
As if she mourned for brewers and dyers.
Chorus. But she is cool'd and cleans'd by streams
Of flowing and of ebbing Thames.'

The Epilogue in its concluding lines seems, as remarked above, to touch the root of the intention of the entertainment:

'Perhaps, some were so cozen'd as to come
To see us weave in the dramatic loom
. . . . . .
These were your plays, *but get them if you can.*'

Part of the music for this entertainment was written by Henry Lawes.

Scenes, and the Story sung in Recitative Musick,'—an epitome of the *First Part* of the Opera performed and printed after the Restoration[1]. D'Avenant hereupon removed his entertainment to the Cockpit, where after producing besides *The Siege of Rhodes* similar compositions, *The History of Sir Francis Drake* and *The Cruelties of the Spaniards in Peru*[2], he ventured upon the performance of regular plays written by himself[3]. Thus, under the cover of two sister-arts whose aid was in the end to prove by no means altogether beneficial to it, the English drama had boldly anticipated the Restoration; and was no longer hiding its head when that much-desired event actually took place. Soon after Charles II's entry into London, two theatrical Companies are known to have been acting in the capital[4]. One of these had been formed by a bookseller of the name of Rhodes (said to have been formerly wardrobe-keeper in the Blackfriars Company), who had obtained a licence from the authorities already at the time when General Monk was advancing upon London[5]. For this company a patent was granted to Sir William D'Avenant in August 1660, under the name of 'the Duke [of York]'s Servants;' while for the other, known as 'the Old Actors,' another patent was, under the name of 'the King's Servants,' granted to one of the Killigrews, either Thomas or his less-known younger brother Dr. Henry Killigrew[6]. Of these com-

The re-opening of the theatres.

[1] *Vide infra.*

[2] Both of these, which are operas in the style of *The Siege of Rhodes*, were afterwards included by D'Avenant in his comic entertainment of *The Playhouse to be Let.*

[3] See the Prefatory Memoir to D'Avenant's *Dramatic Works*, p. li. The plays were *The Fair Favourite* (cf. *ante*, p. 363); *The Law against Lovers* (taken from *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, and reproduced in 1662); *The Siege* (briefly described below), and *The Distresses* (cf. *ante*, p. 364).

[4] The only certain evidence seems to be Pepys, from whom it appears that the Old Actors were in possession of the Cockpit in August 1660, and that Rhodes' Company was acting at Whitefriars (Salisbury Court) in March 1661. (Cf. Pepys' *Diary*, Aug. 18, 1660; March 1, 1661.) *The Rump*, acted and printed 1660, is said on the title-page to have been acted at Dorset (Salisbury) Court. Geneste, i. 30.

[5] *Ib.*

[6] The former is the usual statement; but see Dibdin's *Complete History of the Stage*, iv. 23.

panies the former from 1662 acted at Lincoln's Inn Fields, then at Dorset Garden in Salisbury Court, the latter from 1663 at the 'Theatre Royal' near Drury Lane, though the house was not yet called by that famous local name. The further changes in the London theatres during this period I cannot here pursue[1]. In reference however to the extraordinary activity of the English stage, and to the corresponding fertility of our dramatic literature in the period immediately ensuing upon the Restoration, it may be worth while to note the circumstance that it was a rule with the rival companies that neither should ever attempt a play acted by the other[2]. Thus a sentiment superior to that of direct personal rivalry could animate the efforts of the brilliant talents which at this time illustrated the English stage; for though old playgoers remained to uphold the glories of the past[3], there can be little doubt that the actor's art has rarely flourished more in England than in the days of Betterton and his contemporaries. The sunshine neither of royal nor of popular favour was now wanting to the players; and if they basked in it a little too consciously, this might have been pardoned in the case of members of a profession which had suffered so much[4]. It will not be forgotten that from the Restoration

The stage after the Restoration.

[1] It may however be convenient to state in a note that the Companies were afterwards united (from 1682); and that in 1695 a royal licence was granted to a rival Company which performed at the Tennis Court in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The theatre in the Haymarket was built by Sir John Vanbrugh in 1705; and the Lincoln's Inn Company migrated to a new house in Covent Garden in 1733. A theatre in Goodman's Fields—afterwards rendered famous by the first appearance of Garrick—seems to have led a fitful existence from 1729 or 1732; and the number of London theatres might have further increased even then—for there is no limit to human hopefulness in this branch of speculation—had not the famous Act of 1737 deprived the Crown of the power of licensing any more theatres. For further details the reader may resort to Geneste, vols. i and ii, Dibdin, vol. iv, the Introduction to *Biographia Dramatica*, and the amusing and often instructive narrative of Colley Cibber in his *Apology*.

[2] Cibber's *Apology*, p. 77 (second edition).

[3] See the comparison of the old and the Restoration actors in Wright's *Historia Histrionica*.

[4] Already under February 23, 1661, Pepys remarks: 'I see the gallants do begin to be tyred with the vanity and pride of the theatre actors, who are indeed grown very proud and rich.'

women's parts were invariably acted by women — an innovation which in this period led to consequences for the social history of the stage on which it is unnecessary to dwell, but which was from an artistic point of view an indisputable advantage[1].

But to return for a moment to the period of the suppression of the theatres. The love of the drama had been to some extent kept alive by means more legitimate than the surreptitious performance of mutilated plays, and among classes better suited for encouraging a possible revival of our dramatic literature. In the darkest days of the drama and its patrons—'in this tragical age, where the theatre hath been so much out-acted'—one of the most gifted of the pre-Restoration dramatists besought the public to turn to the pages of the most popular among his predecessors, whose works were now—in 1647—first brought before the reader in a collected form[2]. Shirley moreover published several of his own plays during the period of the suppression of the theatres[3]. A poet widely different in tone and talent, but whose name for more than one reason I do not like to pass by altogether, FRANCIS QUARLES[4], who died early in the period of the Civil War (1644), left behind him a comedy, *The Virgin Widow*, termed by Langbaine an innocent, in-

Plays published in the Commonwealth period by Shirley,

Francis Quarles (1592–1644),

[1] So Cibber very justly remarks in his *Apology*, p. 76.—It is clear that upon the innovation of women acting female parts soon followed the utterly vicious practice—from which it is to be feared the stage will never wholly rid itself—of their occasionally acting male. See Dryden's Prologue to *The Tempest*. In 1672 (probably) the male characters in Dryden's *The Maiden Queen* seem to have been performed by women. Other plays, among them Thomas Killigrew's *The Parson's Wedding*, are stated in the *Historia Histrionica* to have in this period been acted 'all by women.'—As to the date of the first introduction of actresses on the English stage cf. *ante*, p. 422, note 3.

[2] See Shirley's Preface to the Folio (1647) edition of Beaumont and Fletcher.

[3] Cf. *ante*, pp. 317, 332; and Dyce's *Shirley*, i. li.

[4] Quarles connects himself by his famous *Emblems* with a curious element in our older dramatic literature (cf. vol. i. p. 503). By the post-Restoration dramatists that work seems to have been regarded as the type of an old-fashioned book of sober diversion; see Southerne's *The Maid's Last Prayer* (iii. 1), and I think I have met with a similar passage in one of Steele's comedies. But his *Virgin Widow* was not forgotten in the Restoration period; for one of the most famous passages in *The Rehearsal* (the soliloquy of Volscius with one boot on and the other off) appears to be partly in ridicule of a passage in Quarles' play.

offensive play, which was published in 1649. Among the younger generation several likewise showed signs of not despairing of their art. The indefatigable and irrepressible D'Avenant—to whom much should be forgiven for his valiant adherence to an apparently hopeless cause—published in 1643 and 1649 two of his plays (significantly enough, without the usual commendatory verses) which had already been acted, but not printed[1]. Towards the close of the Protectorate SIR ASTON COKAIN (we will allow him his disputed title) published two plays, of which one, though by no means original, is not devoid of merit. His *The Obstinate Lady* (printed 1657) is a romantic comedy in the pre-Restoration style, written with the author's usual fluency, but possessing no poetic or other merit. The main plot is a vulgarised version of the idea, in itself not very pleasing, of one of Massinger's plays[2]. *Trappolin Creduto Principe, or Trappolin Supposed a Prince* (printed 1658) announces itself as an 'Italian Tragi-Comedy;' but the author protests that 'it is no translation[3].' The laughable plot of this piece, which had a long

Sir William D'Avenant,

Sir Aston Cokain (1608–1683),

[1] *The Unfortunate Lovers* and *Love and Honour* (cf. *ante*, p. 363).

[2] *A Very Woman.* In Lorece's nonsensical account of his travels there is an obvious reminiscence of Shirley's Jack Freshwater in *The Ball*; cf. *ante*, p. 323.

[3] See Prologue:

'It is no translation, for he ne'er
But twice in Venice did it ever hear.'

One of the versions of *Trappolin* was published, with some additional songs set to Scotch airs, by Allan Ramsay in 1733. It will interest those who like to note the vitality of dramatic traditions to observe that the Duke of Florence in Cokain's piece, during whose absence the sham Duke plays his pranks, leaves behind him as one of his lieutenants 'the Lord Machavil,' 'one of those that doth in Florence nourish vice.' (Cf. vol. i. p. 185, note 2.) *Trappolin* has been thought to have been originally produced before the Restoration, which is very possible; in any case Cokain may almost be reckoned among the pre-Restoration dramatists. A mask by him has been noted *ante*, p. 373. After the Restoration he produced *The Tragedy of Ovid* (printed 1662), an odd farrago of the most doubtful learning and the most sensational tragic effects. These latter are evolved out of the main plot, which treats of the jealousy of Bassanes, a young lord of Tomos. He kills his chaste wife's lover, and then binds her in a chair, having forced her supposed paramour's heart into her hand. This is out-Fording Ford (cf. *ante*, p. 299, note). The main characters are all put to death, including Ovid, who has played a very useless part throughout and dies on receiving the news that his last hopes of a recall to Rome are at an end. Among the comic scenes there is one in which Hannibal, a banished Italian

vitality in various forms, is a new version of the story of *Olde Fortunatus*[1]; and the comedy itself, written partly in prose, partly in blank-verse, and with a mask in rhyme in the middle, is not unentertaining, though occasionally very coarse. Cokain's fluency is undeniable; but I do not know with what other dramatic gift he is to be credited, unless that of a skilful appropriation of other men's ideas be regarded as such. (He was born in 1608, and died in 1683[2].) Another royalist who took an active part in the Civil War, though a physician by profession, WILLIAM CHAMBERLAYNE (born 1620; died 1689), the author of *Pharonnida*, avowedly composed his only extant play, the tragi-comedy of *Love's Victory* (printed 1658; acted 1678), for reading while 'the mourning stage was silent.' He inveighs against the blind age when

William Chamberlayne (1620–1689),

> 'in a cell
> The scholar stews his catholic brains for food'—

but the product is in this case a mixture or 'meander' of romantic and comic scenes, of which fluency of composition and a tendency to operatic effects are the only notable characteristics. The metre is of course still blank-verse[3]. Finally, to the period of hope deferred if not of sickness of heart belong the plays of THOMAS KILLIGREW[4] (1611–

Thomas Killigrew (1611–1683).

captain, invites a skeleton on a gibbet to supper; another in which the skeleton avails himself of the invitation; and a third in which Hannibal dines in return with the spectre and is carried off by devils. This device is thought to have been borrowed by Cokain from the Italian *Il Atheisto Fulminato*, and resembles the famous situation (borrowed from a Spanish play) in Molière's *Festin de Pierre* copied by Shadwell in *The Libertine*.—A long mask is also introduced into this play.

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 40.

[2] See *The Dramatic Works of Sir Aston Cokain. With Memoir &c.* (By James Maidment and W. H. Logan.) 1874. Cokain was of an ancient family and a Roman Catholic; travelled (for his knowledge of Italy see the catalogue of Italian towns in *Trappolin*, ii. 3); and suffered for his religion and the King's cause in the Civil Wars. There are doubts as to his baronetcy, which he declared to have been conferred upon him by the King in the time of the troubles.

[3] *Pharonnida* (and *Love's Victory*). By William Chamberlayne. 3 vols., 1820. *Pharonnida* was published in 1659, and is a heroic poem, which was afterwards (in 1683), in accordance with the fashion of the time, turned into a prose-novel under the title of *Eromena, or The Noble Stranger*. *Love's Victory* forms the subject of a paper in *The Retrospective Review*, vol. i. part ii.

[4] *Comedies and Tragedies.* Written by Thomas Killigrew. Fol. 1664.

1683), the companion of King Charles II in evil and in good fortune. As to the gifts by which he earned his traditional, if not actual, title of 'the King's Jester' we must trust report; but supposing them to have been such as to warrant the King's choice, it may be doubted whether the Jester ever said a better thing of any of his butts than the grave Denham wrote of him:

> 'Had Cowley ne'er spoke, Killigrew ne'er writ,
> Combin'd in one, they'd made a matchless wit[1].'

His plays, which are almost entirely in prose, are in the main utterly unreadable, and no better example could be found of the full meaning of the term *prosiness*. They were clearly not written for acting, with the exception perhaps of the comedy of *The Parson's Wedding* (acted 1664); and this and the tragi-comedy of *Claricilla* (acted 1661) are in fact the only two of Thomas Killigrew's works known to have been brought on the stage. The plots,

Thomas Killigrew, after serving as Page of Honour to Charles I, followed Charles II into exile; and if *Thommaso* be anything like a faithful picture of the behaviour of English cavaliers in their days of deprivation abroad, one ceases to wonder at the conduct of some among them on their return. Pepys writes under Feb. 13, 1668: 'Mr. Brisband tells me in discourse that Tom Killigrew hath a fee out of the Wardrobe for cap and bells, under the title of the King's Foole or Jester; and may revile or jeere any body, the greatest person, without offence, by the privilege of his place.'—Of his plays Killigrew remarks *To the Reader:* 'I shall only say, If you have as much leasure to Read as I had to Write these Plays, you may, as I did, find a diversion; though I wish it you upon better terms than Twenty Years Banishment.' The eight plays (three being in two Parts each) profess to be written in nine different cities, *viz.* Naples, Basil, Paris, Turin, Florence, Madrid, Venice, Rome, and London. The titles of those not mentioned in the text are *Cecilia and Clorinda, or Love in Arms; Bellamira her Dream, or The Love of Shadows;* and *The Prisoners*—all 'tragi-comedies.' The action of the plays in two Parts runs on through both.—In *The Princesse* (v. 2) the satire against soldiers and their self-government, and in *The Parson's Wedding* the tag-epilogue, singularly modern in manner, may be worth pointing out. This comedy is printed in vol. iii of *The Ancient British Drama.*—As to the question whether it was Thomas Killigrew or his brother Henry who received the patent for the King's Company, vide *ante*, p. 447. Henry Killigrew (a clergyman, and Master of the Savoy) wrote one juvenile play, *The Conspiracy* (1638), which was republished in 1653 under the title of *Pallantus and Eudora.* He was the father of the famous Anne Killigrew, to whose memory Dryden addressed some of his noblest lines. The third (and eldest) brother, Sir William Killigrew, wrote several plays.

[1] Quoted by Geneste, i. 391.

which seem generally borrowed—that of *The Parson's Wedding* appears to be ultimately traceable to Calderon's *Dama Duende*[1]—cost, as in the case of *The Princesse, or Love at First Sight* (tragi-comedy), too great an effort to unravel; among the serious plays *The Pilgrim* (tragedy) is perhaps not altogether unendurable, the plot being here made clear at the outset. The comic plays are *The Parson's Wedding* and *Thomaso, or The Wanderer* (Part I especially). The fun is here coarse to the utmost degree, and the satirical ribaldry in the former play (of which the subject is the overreaching of a parson by a soldier) can only be described by the word blackguardly. The localities in which the scene of these plays is laid vary almost as much as those of their composition.

The effects of the Restoration period upon our dramatic literature not controlled by the power of individual genius.

What might have been the course of our dramatic literature had no civil conflict broken out to cause the temporary closing of the theatres, or had that conflict terminated with a Restoration honestly endeavouring to do justice to the Presbyterian element in the combination to which the King owed his return, it would be alike useless to conjecture. As it was, the dramatic more than any other branch of our literature was subjected to influences which nothing but the power of genius guided by a definite moral consciousness could have withstood or overcome. It is at such periods that a great genius can do much, though not all, to arrest or modify the influence of an age. But unhappily the greatest writer of the Restoration period lent himself, with a facility unparalleled in our literature, to the reflexion of artistic tendencies sanctioned by no higher stamp than that of popularity or fashion, and was unable to resist the influence of an immorality spreading its contagion over flowers and weeds alike. Dryden's genius could not 'dwell apart' like Milton's. In the eager haste of political and religious strife, under the pressure of necessity and under the garish light of royal favour or party patronage, in the hot air of

[1] Dibdin, iv. 94.

controversy and factions, he plied his pen in panegyric or invective, in rhetoric or satire, in confessions, apologies, declarations, recantations. Thus he was 'hurried down' his age instead of helping to guide it; and where he failed, no other genius capable of exerting a commanding influence arose to stem the current.

The political results of the Restoration

The political results of the Restoration need not be touched upon here, except from one or two special points of view. The return of a Stuart King by no means undid the work of the Civil Conflict, in so far as that work was in itself restorative and conservative; and when the tenacity of Charles II and the headstrong attempts of James II had ended by bringing about another Revolution, a fresh combination of parties re-established on a still safer basis the securities won in the days of Charles I. But the Court party proper—which it would be a grave error to credit with the name of conservative—still lived in the traditions, and clung to the formulae, of absolute government; their politics consisted in a clamorous deference to the manifest wishes of the Sovereign, and in an angry defiance of the opponents of what at any time seemed to be his policy. The great majority of the dramatists unhesitatingly fell in with this convenient method of partisanship. *Many* are unfit to govern, *one* is called upon to rule,—such is the burden of their political wisdom and of their political satire, from the worthy Lord Orrery and the trenchant Sir Robert Howard onwards. In the hands of Dryden and others, the tragedy of the Restoration lends itself to diatribes against limited monarchy[1] and to exaltation of the right divine. The wit of comedy in the same period directs itself either against the memories of republican government[2], or against the adversaries

as viewed by the Court party

and the great body of the dramatists of the age.

The political and

[1] Such as the (not ineffective) passage in Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* Part II, i. 2.—It may perhaps be noted that the old rule against the introduction of 'modern Christian Kings' on the stage (cf. *ante*, p. 407) is violated by Sir Robert Howard in *The Duke of Lerma*, where Philip IV, who had only recently died, appears. Later, in 1701, Mrs. Pix brought Peter the Great on the stage in *The Czar of Muscovy* (Dibdin, iv. 344); but perhaps he was considered 'no Lord's Anointed, but a Russian Bear.'

[2] Already in 1660 was acted and printed a play called *The Rump* (cf.

of the policy of the Crown. The stage was made a vehicle of political partisanship, more particularly in the days of the Exclusion Bill, when the allusions in Prologues and Epilogues become far too numerous to mention, and when Shaftesbury as the head of the Opposition was attacked and caricatured in every way ingenuity could devise[1]. Religious partisanship as a matter of course intermingled with political—for, as the very lucid madman says in Congreve[2], 'religion and politics are a couple of topics no more like one another than oil and vinegar; and yet these two, beaten together by a state-cook, make sauce for the whole nation.' Thus in uncompromising partisanship the majority of the Restoration dramatists far surpass their predecessors; and in their personal abuse of the enemies, real or supposed, of the cause with which they identify themselves, they add a new element—the most deplorable of all—to the literature of the theatre.

religious partisanship of the dramatists, encouraged by the Restoration;

No voice—except that of Milton prophesying in his days of darkness—was heard to protest against this servility of sentiment, though at least one poet of unimpeachable loyalty bravely resolved to pour ridicule upon the evil excrescences of his own party[3]. In time, however, the discovery that the stage might be employed as an auxiliary in political and religious partisanship was made use of by the opponents as well as the supporters of the policy of the Court; the 'Popish Plot' excitement for a time obliged

intensified in the latter part of the reign of Charles II;

Geneste, i. 30). Sir Robert Howard in 1665 produced *The Committee;* Crowne in 1673 his *City Politics;* Mrs. Behn in 1682 *The Roundheads.* Other plays of this description are mentioned by Dibdin: Sheppard's *The Committee-Man Curried* seems to have been written already in 1647 (Geneste, x. 121); Needham's *The Levellers Levelled* was an 'interlude' of the same year (*ib.* viii. 329); of Neville's *Shuffling, Cutting and Dealing with Oliver Protector and Others* I do not know the date.

[1] See below as to Dryden and Lee's *The Duke of Guise* (1682). Shaftesbury was also personally satirised or attacked in Nevil Payne's *The Siege of Constantinople* (1675; see Geneste, i. 167); in Mrs. Behn's *The City Heiress* (1681; see *ib.* p. 319); in Southerne's *The Loyal Brother, or The Persian Prince* (1682; see *ib.* p. 323); in Otway's *Venice Preserved* (1682); in Dryden's *Albion and Albanius* (1685), and doubtless in many other plays. Otway's *Caius Marius* (1680) is seasoned with allusions to the troublous times in which it was produced.

[2] *Love for Love*, iv. 10.

[3] See below as to Cowley's *Cutter of Coleman Street.*

the Court itself to swim with the current of Protestant prejudice; Settle raked up the scandalous legend of *Pope Joan;* and Shadwell stood forth as the representative of the public horror of the bugbears of Roman and of Anglican priestcraft [1]. These efforts are however impersonal in their character as compared with those which were protected by the aegis of Court favour. Of the Revolution of 1688 no immediate reflexion is perceptible in our dramatic literature, though a few pamphlets in a dramatic shape appear to have hailed the downfall of King James [2]. The Revolution of 1688 brought to the throne a prince who had no sympathy with the excesses of partisanship and who never entered the doors of a theatre; but such manifestations of political feeling as were now permitted to the dramatists had to take the opposite direction to that which the majority of them had formerly pursued; Shadwell was laureate, and could honestly proclaim the principles which he had always upheld; while for the former adherents of the Stuart cause there remained nothing but to despond like Dryden [3] or to accommodate themselves like Crowne [4]. Neither the character of King William nor that of his Government was however of a nature to fire dramatic enthusiasm; it was easier to suppress what seemed dangerous [5] than to provoke demonstrations of loyal sympathy, except at seasons of special excitement [6]. The

moderated by the Revolution of 1688;

[1] See *The Lancashire Witches.* Carpenter's *The Pragmatical Jesuit New-Leavened* (cf. Dibdin, iv. 140; Geneste, x. 142) seems to belong to the same period.

[2] The following are mentioned by Geneste (i. 468) as published in 1690: *The Abdicated Prince, or The Adventures of Four Years; The Bloody Duke, or The Adventures for a Crown; The Banished Duke, or The Tragedy of Infortunatus* (Monmouth); *The Royal Flight, or The Conquest of Ireland.*

[3] See the closing lines of his *King Arthur* (1691).

[4] See his *The English Friar* (1689).

[5] The Master of the Revels is said in King William's reign to have cut out the whole act i of *Richard III,* because the distresses of Henry VI there adverted to might put weak people too much in mind of King James, then an exile in France.

[6] So in 1697 Dennis produced his *A Plot and No Plot, or Jacobite Credulity.* The 'Assassination Plot' had been discovered in 1696.—Rowe professed to have intended the Tamerlane and Bajazet of his *Tamerlane* (1702) as poetic parallels of William and Lewis XIV respectively—the likeness was certainly vague enough to require pointing out.

new Government was in general little loved even by those who most cordially detested the old; and though there were many Jacobites and anti-Jacobites, the 'Williamites' proper were hardly a national party. In the reign of Anne, a Royal Order against the improprieties of the stage (issued in 1704[1]) may have contributed further to diminish its interference in political and religious controversies; but the main interests of political life had now ceased to turn upon the issues which divided the nation as well as politicians proper into two sides; and if the assertion of a contemporary dramatist that 'faction slept[2]' cannot be regarded as correct, at all events a great war had diverted much of the public attention from party-strife at home. When that war closed, one party claiming its glories and the other the honour of having brought it to a close, the stage, or rather the theatre in front of the curtain, mildly reflected their rivalry on the famous occasion of the production of Addison's *Cato*. That both parties could claim the college rhetoric of this tragedy as an expression of their sentiments, shows to how neutral a tint the angry hues of dramatic partisanship had by this time been subdued.

subsides in the reign of Anne.

A word will suffice to indicate another point of view from which the political results of the Restoration and the Revolution may be regarded in their connexion with the dramatic literature of the period. The reign of Charles II was barren of national glories; its wars against the Dutch were inspired by dynastic motives, which sought to avail themselves of the ignoble feeling of commercial jealousy, and such enthusiasm as they excited had to be made to order. In the beginning of this period it is instructive to observe in our dramatic literature[3] an evident aversion from soldiers and soldiering, due to the uneasy remembrance of the military era of the Civil War and the Commonwealth. Dryden's attempt as a dramatist to excite popular animosity against the Dutch[4] must be regarded as

Symptoms of a patriotic enthusiasm for the wars of the country necessarily absent

[1] It is given by Geneste, ii. 296.
[2] See the Prologue to Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707).
[3] See *e.g.* Thomas Killigrew's *The Princess;* D'Avenant's *The Siege.*
[4] See *The Massacre of Amboyna;* and cf. *The State of Innocence.*

till the days of Marlborough.

both the feeblest and the unworthiest effort by which he ever degraded his pen. It is not till the nation had once more become engaged in a great struggle for a cause worthy of sacrifices, that the note of a patriotic spirit once more makes itself heard; and in the comedies of Farquhar, and still more in those of Steele, we are reminded that England had engaged in a mighty contest, and that she had sympathy as well as admiration to bestow upon the brave soldiers whose valour was helping to raise her to the foremost rank among European nations.

Social effects of the Restoration limited in their range.

The Restoration, however, signifies not only a political change, but also a social reaction. The backward movement was indeed probably neither so deep nor so broad as has frequently been assumed. On the part of the nation at large the reaction was not against the essence of Puritanism. The Restoration age indeed constituted a revulsion and a protest against the domination of an extreme and extravagant minority; but it would be to mistake the historical character of the English nation, were we to suppose it to have been as such hurried into the opposite extreme, and to have exchanged a fanatical observance of an unnatural code for an equally irrational lawlessness. With the extreme developements of the Revolution which had momentarily triumphed in the victory of the army over the Parliament, which Oliver Cromwell had with difficulty held in check, and which after his death again sought to thrust themselves forward, the nation at large had never sympathised; and it was as a liberation from the fear of their ultimate victory that men who had by no means shared in the sentimental loyalty of the Cavaliers—even the sober-minded Presbyterians of the great towns—welcomed the return of the Stuarts. Charles II brought with him what these men—as parties to the contract—had not designed to include in it; but the licence and wantonness of his Court, the literature which that Court affected, and of which it accordingly soon found a supply equal to the demand, were not the manners and the literature of the nation. Thus—for I leave aside other illustrations from the literature of the

Literature and the stage no longer national.

period[1]—the Restoration stage failed either to revive the old national drama, or to substitute a new genuinely national growth in its place. Not only did large classes even of the London population regard the theatres in no other light but that of centres of idleness and mischief; but the elements composing their public were probably even fewer than they had been in the Elisabethan days, and it was the tastes of these elements only which the dramatists of the Restoration were anxious to gratify.

The moral tone of the stage not in sympathy with that of the people at large.

The literature of the stage was not only out of sympathy with the life of the people at large, but was in part both intended and received as an insult to it. The moral philosophy which pervaded this literature was a destructive one; after passing through such a medium, the teachings of Hobbes commended themselves in the form of the dogma of the non-existence of a conscience or a moral sense, or of any essential distinctions between Right and Wrong. While politicians were seeking to rivet a hard-and-fast ecclesiastical system upon the nation, the ministers of religion are treated by the dramatists with undisguised dislike or contempt, with whatever Church the writer may happen to be individually associated[2].

[1] It is perhaps worth observing that *Hudibras*, infinitely the most popular book of the age, and published almost immediately after the Restoration, is after all only an attack upon the merest outside of the Puritan movement,—a mere repetition of the comments which during the rule of Puritanism men had been making 'under the rose' and which after its overthrow they found it a natural relief to make aloud. *Hudibras* went no further than this; and the popularity of Butler's burlesque can hardly be said to prove that the inner spirit of Puritanism was extinct in the English people.—How the social reaction affected different spheres even of London society—connected though in different ways with Court or Government—might be easily shown by a comparison from this point of view of the *Memoirs* of Grammont with the *Diary* of Pepys, and of both with the *Diary* of Evelyn.

[2] This hatred of priests as such—to which Jeremy Collier had good reason to advert in his *Short View*, though his charges were not based on altogether tenable grounds—is a very significant note of the tragedy as well as the comedy of the Restoration age. For examples see Dryden's *The Indian Emperor* (i. 2); *The Spanish Friar*, *passim*; and the Mufti in *Don Sebastian*, written after the author's conversion to the Church of Rome. A similar spirit is discernible in Lee (see his *Lucius Junius Brutus*) and in Crowne (see his *Thyestes*, iv. 2, and Epilogue). Even Rowe has characters such as Magas (in *The Ambitious Stepmother*) and the Dervise (in *Tamerlane*).

The drama loses its full connexion with the national life.

Thus the drama, living by the breath of fashion and by the favour of a class, contributed to divorce the literary activity of the nation from its other energies. In Charles II's and James II's age the leaders of general literature were the hangers-on of the Court, while the capital was still small enough to find a real as well as nominal centre of social fashions in a palace.

In the next reigns, those classes of society which found their centre in political party-life and in the literary and other diversions of the capital were only beginning to recover a fuller sympathy with the moral, intellectual, and social life of the middle classes of the population. Literature already in the reigns of William and of Anne contributed to this desirable result, but it was the literature of prose essays and the beginnings of prose fiction, not that of the stage. Not the drama, but the writings of De Foe, Steele, and Addison, and of their successors the great novelists of the eighteenth century, restored to our popular literature its genuinely national character. There is, then, nothing paradoxical in the assertion that the later Stuart drama—from the Restoration to the close of the reign of Anne—is not essentially a national growth. It stands under the special influence of classes whose tendencies, manners, and morals are not to be identified with those of the nation at large.

The influence of the Court of Charles II upon the drama—in what sense beneficial,

The direct influence of the Court and of its central figure the King is made a boast by the drama of the Restoration age. That this influence was altogether pernicious it would be an error to suppose. In Dryden's assertion[1] that the refinement of conversation, due to the Court 'and particularly to the King, whose example gives a law to it,' benefited the language of the stage, there was doubtless an element of truth, though the term refinement ill expresses the combination of ease, lightness, and wit which was the utmost that could be derived from such a source. Comedy however, in so far as it was devoted to the representation of manners, could not but benefit by

[1] *Defence of the Epilogue* (to Part II of *The Conquest of Granada*, 1672).

being brought into so direct a contact with those spheres of society which must always give the law to many of its forms. 'The greatest pleasure,' says a dramatist of this age[1], that King Charles 'had from the stage was in comedy, and he often commanded me to write it.' The comedy of the Restoration period has its faults as well as its vices; but in ease of manner and freedom of movement—the prerogatives, whatever they are worth, of the world of high life—it is superior to Elisabethan comedy on the one hand, and to the comedy of the Georgian period, taken as a whole, on the other. But this advantage was far outweighed by the damage which, as Dryden was to live to declare[2], was done to the stage by the low standard of morality which the Court communicated to the theatre. It became in sober truth a 'house of scandal' behind as well as in front of the curtain; and there is no need to show how conscious the dramatists themselves were of the fact. The responsibility of their aberrations cannot be shifted from the dramatists to their patrons, but it is not to be denied that a different Court would have made possible, if not have given rise to, a different stage. From the good-will of a Charles II or the fitful patronage of a Rochester[3] no efforts of a higher kind could derive a real or a lasting encouragement.

and in what sense pernicious.

The influence of King and Court, however, also helped very materially to augment, and in particular directions to create, a tendency which rarely stands in need of encouragement in any dramatic literature. Lord Orrery[4] and Dryden[5] ascribe to the direct influence of the royal

The influence of foreign dramatic literatures upon our own encouraged.

[1] Crowne, in the Dedication of *Sir Courtly Nice*.

[2] Epilogue to *The Pilgrim* (1700).

[3] Rochester (to whom, under the name of Rosidore, Lee pays an admiring tribute in *The Princess of Cleve*, act i) is the very type of the species of patron who is the curse of literary men. In order to oust Dryden from the eminence which he was on the eve of securing, Rochester fostered the feeble dramatic talent of Settle; to reduce Settle to his level, and to spite Dryden, he encouraged the efforts of Crowne; and to leave Crowne in no doubt as to the source of fashionable success, he bestowed his fickle favours upon the youthful Otway, whom he likewise afterwards abandoned.

[4] See the Preface to his *Plays*.

[5] See the Dedication to his *The Indian Emperor*.

taste the earliest examples and the subsequent popularity of those 'Heroic Plays' of which so much will have to be said in this chapter, and which are in their origin to be regarded as an essentially foreign growth. But this particular species is only an extreme instance of the influence exercised by the example of a foreign literature, with the aid of fashion, upon the progress of our own drama, and it may be worth while to consider connectedly the nature of the foreign literary growths with which it in this period came into contact.

Isolated followers of the ancients.

Of the dramatic literatures which had hitherto *directly* influenced our own, those of classical antiquity need hardly be taken into account in connexion with the later Stuart period. Milton's *Samson Agonistes* was an experiment in a direction which will at all times find followers who venture to treat the art of dramatic sculpture as one which has not been lost; but the Greek drama can only be imitated, it cannot be revived, whether the name of the artist be Milton, or Mason, or Matthew Arnold. Even in the old days Seneca, not Sophocles, had served as a model; and it had been the narrower range of the New Comedy in its Latin reproduction, not the glorious freedom of the Old, from which modern dramatists had borrowed plots, or subjects, or characters. In this period it would be an error to seek in an occasional *Œdipus* or *Thyestes* any proof of immediate study of the classical drama[1], or to suppose that Plautus and Terence were habitually resorted to except through such mediation as that of Molière. Here and there a classical scholar essayed his skill in translating Greek or Latin plays[2], but such scholarly exercises have no connexion with a living dramatic literature.

The Italian drama, as well as Italian fiction, doubtless

[1] These tragedies, by Dryden and Lee, and by Crowne, will be noticed below. Charles D'Avenant's *Circe* (1677), with which I am not acquainted, is stated to have been founded on the *Iphigenia in Tauride* of Euripides.

[2] Dibdin (iv. 137–140) mentions a translation of Sophocles' *Electra* by Wase and of Aristophanes' *Clouds* by Stanley, and the translation by Hoole of all the comedies of Terence.

still continued occasionally to furnish plots[1]; and the remnants of the extraordinary popularity once enjoyed by the master-pieces of the Italian pastoral drama still produced occasional translations of the *Pastor Fido* and the *Aminta*[2]. But the chief contact between the Italian and the English theatre is to be sought in a special field—that of the opera—as to which a few words will be said below.

Nature of contact with the Italian drama.

Unlike Italian dramatic literature, that of Spain was in the latter half of the seventeenth century still a vigorous growth. Ruiz de Alarcon, in whose comedies, as contrasted with those of Lope, literary historians recognise the distinctive element of a moral purpose[3], had died shortly after the most brilliant of Spanish dramatists. Tirso de Molina, to whom a similar praise seems not to be due, but whose frivolous gaiety appears to have been accompanied by an ingenuity in the construction of plots which did not shrink however from the use of the most improbable expedients[4], survived till 1648. The date of the death of Francisco de Rojas Zorilla (born 1607), who was largely plundered by the French dramatists of the latter half of the century[5], is unknown; but he appears to have flourished for some time after the English Restoration. The Spanish dramatist whose manner appears most nearly to approach the master-pieces of French and later English comedy of character, and to whom the former directly, the latter indirectly, must have been in no incon-

Influence of later Spanish dramatists.

[1] See *e.g.* Wilson's *Belphegor* and Cokain's *Trappolin Creduto Principe.*—In Farquhar's *The Twin-Rivals* (1702) a poet in want of a plot is still recommended to 'read the Italian' as well as the 'Spanish plays' (iii. 1).

[2] Both Sir R. Fanshawe and Elkanah Settle translated the former, an author of the name of Dancer the latter.

[3] Klein, xi. Part i. p. 5, where a remark to the same effect is quoted from Hartzenbusch, and other Spanish authorities are appealed to in support of it. Alarcon died in 1639, Lope de Vega in 1635.—On a play by Alarcon, as is noted below, Corneille founded *Le Menteur*, which was translated into English, and furnished the subject of comedies by Steele and Foote.

[4] *Ib.* p. 114 *seqq.* On Tirso's *El Burlador de Sevilla y Convivad de Piedra* (which borrowed its own story from the *Chronicle of Seville*) Molière founded his *Le Festin de Pierre* (cf. Ticknor, ii. 324, and Klein, *u.s.*, p. 161 *seqq.*), which Shadwell copied in his *The Libertine.*

[5] *Ib.* p. 186.

siderable degree indebted, Agustin Moreto[1], died in 1669. Finally, Calderon de la Barca, in whom both the religious and national enthusiasm and the artificiality of the Spanish drama reached their highest point—in whose highly-wrought plots our dramatists found an occasional resource[2], while the florid brilliancy of his tragic style could not be similarly transmitted—continued his extraordinary productivity to the close of a long life in 1681.

English followers of the Spanish dramatists:

The attention of English authors had long been directed to the Spanish drama; and the tastes of King Charles II, however much he might in literary as in other matters be inclined to allow France the *jus praecedendi*, well accorded with the manner and matter of the more recent developements of Spanish dramatic literature. Particularly, therefore, in the earlier part of this reign our dramatists are found continuing to avail themselves of Spanish originals, or to use Spanish sources, like some of their predecessors before the Restoration. Thus,

G. Digby, Earl of Bristol (1612–1676).

GEORGE DIGBY, EARL OF BRISTOL (died 1676), who played so prominent and peculiar a part in the political history of the times, besides 'making out of Spanish,' *i. e.* Calderon, two comedies which have been lost[3], adapted a third play by the same poet

[1] Moreto's masterpiece, *El Desden con el Desden*, is, under the title of *Donna Diana*, familar to the German stage, and was introduced to the English in 1864 by a version from the hand of Mr. Westland Marston. See H. Morley, *The Journal of a London Playgoer*, p. 321. For an exposition of Moreto's dramatic developement see Klein, *u. s.*, pp. 258–446. I am not aware of any English play having been founded upon Moreto except Crowne's *Sir Courtly Nice*; but his style of comedy seems to present many points of resemblance to that which was popular on the English stage in the latter half of the seventeenth century. His *El lindo Don Diego* ('pretty Don Diego') is described by Klein (p. 296) as the first of the species known in the Spanish drama as the *comedia de figuron*, 'whose hero is no stereotyped character-mask, but a comic mock figure reflected on to the stage as a picture of the age and its manners from the fool's world of actual social life'—in fact a character of *affectation*, to borrow an expression of Congreve's. He is at the same time the Spanish fop, corresponding to the English fops of Etherege, Vanbrugh, and Colley Cibber. As a whole the comedy of Moreto seems to admit of being described as social comedy, simpler in plot and more vigorous in the drawing of character than that of his Spanish predecessors.

[2] Cf. *ante*, pp. 210, 229, as to possible debts on the part of Fletcher; and see below.

[3] *'Tis Better than It Was* and *Worse and Worse*, taken, as Ticknor (ii. 392, note) thinks there can be little doubt, from Calderon's *Mejor Esta que Estaba* and *Peor Esta que Estaba* respectively.

(*No Sempre lo Peor es Cierto*) under the title of *Elvira, or The Worse not always True* (printed 1667)[1]. We have here a long and interesting intrigue ending with the vindication of suspected fidelity, and the action, especially at the close, is abundant. The style is formal both in the serious parts and even in the protracted humours of the servants Chichon and Francisca; and apart from the fact that the dialogue is too lengthy for English taste, the play reads too palpably like a translation. Lord Bristol is likewise said to have joined SIR SAMUEL TUKE (a gentleman who had served the King in the Civil War, and who died in 1673) in his adaptation, made by the advice of King Charles II, of Calderon's *Los Empeños de Seis Horas*, under the title of *The Adventures of Five Hours*[2] (printed 1662). This is a genuine Spanish comedy of intrigue, bustling and amusing in its English dress, and here and there touched with allusions (such as those directed against the Dutch) evidently added by English hands. But the propriety of the dialogue would of itself suffice to show that it is no English comedy. SIR RICHARD FANSHAWE (1607–1666), who represented both Charles I and Charles II at Madrid, translated two plays of Antonio de Mendoza[3]; and among the works of more than one English dramatist of the reign of Charles II we shall notice plays of indubitably Spanish extraction[4]. Now and then an older

Sir Samuel Tuke (d. 1673).

Sir Richard Fanshawe (1607–1666).

[1] Printed in Dodsley (1827), vol. xii, and in *The Ancient British Drama*, vol. iii.

[2] Ib.

[3] *Querer per solo querer* (printed 1671) and the *Fiestas de Aranjuez* (1670).

[4] Dryden's *The Wild Gallant* and *The Rival Ladies*, and doubtless also Lord Orrery's *Guzman*, were from Spanish sources; Thomas Killigrew's *The Parson's Wedding* (acted 1664) was taken from Calderon's *Dama Duende;* of Crowne's *Sir Courtly Nice* the plot (already, as it proved, used by a previous author) had been suggested to him by King Charles II from Moreto's *No Puede Ser;* Wycherley owed the most amusing scenes of his *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* to Calderon's *El Maestro de Danzar;* Dryden's *An Evening's Love* came only indirectly from Calderon through Thomas Corneille; Steele's *The Lying Lover* similarly from Alarcon; Mrs. Centlivre took her *The Perplex'd Lovers*, and probably also one or two other of her comedies, from a Spanish source; Colley Cibber's *She Would and She Would Not* derived its plot from *The Counterfeits*, a play 'of Spanish extraction,' by a dramatist named Leanard (Dibdin, iv. 144).

Spanish play or story[1] may have been similarly turned to account.

The French drama under Lewis XIV.

But by far the most important influence to which the English drama of this period was subjected by any foreign literature proceeded from that of France. It should be remembered that at the time of the Restoration French literature in its various branches had as yet by no means definitively fixed those forms in which it for so long a period exercised a potent sway over the literatures of other European countries. Till within a few years of the return of the Stuarts France had been agitated by the wars of the Fronde—a revolt carried on by a strange combination of heterogeneous forces against the Cardinal-Minister, Mazarin. Nor was it till the year 1661 that Lewis XIV, round whose person the whole literary movement as well as the political system of his age was to revolve, began to govern on his own account. Of the political expediency—indeed of the political necessity—of the attitude assumed by the French monarchy during the earlier years of his rule there can be no doubt, nor of the generous and lofty ideas which animated him and his counsellors. This spirit communicated itself to the master-minds of French literature, to whose efforts in this its greatest period prejudice alone can deny the credit due to true nobility of sentiment. But neither a nation nor its literature can be transformed at once; and in manner as in matter the French men of letters trained under the influences of the second quarter of the seventeenth century differ from those whose youth belongs to the third, as again the writers of the earlier are to be distinguished from those of the later part of Lewis XIV's reign. His greatness, and that of the literature which adorned it, alike had their period of rise, their meridian, and their decline. But my purpose is only to indicate the bearing of the above observation upon two branches of French literature, both of which materially influenced the progress of our English drama. They were naturally and

[1] As in Crowne's *The Curious Impertinent* from *Don Quixote*, or in D'Urfey's dramatic version of that novel, so severely handled by Jeremy Collier.

necessarily those branches which commended themselves to the favour of the only classes of French society with whom and with whose tastes the patrons and the authors of English dramatic works could be brought into a more than passing contact.

The troubles and terrors of the great civil and religious wars of the sixteenth century had—in accordance with a law of human nature which reflects itself in the history of so many literatures—produced a reaction in certain spheres of French society towards culture and refinement. The people, according to its wont, solaced or distracted its weariness of political and social troubles by listening to the ministers of that cynical gaiety which has always flourished in the darkest hours of French popular life[1]. But in other spheres of society, the influence of the same reaction is observable even in the midst of the evil days which succeeded the death of Henry IV. It was in the year of his murder that Honoré d'Urfé published the first volume of his pastoral romance *L'Astrée*, which translated courtiers into shepherds and shepherds into heroes of fiction. Soon afterwards Camus produced his devotional romances, and Lourdelot his narrative of the triumphs of 'perfect love.' Purism of sentiment was accompanied by a tendency to correctness and elegance of diction since Malherbe had appeared as the scholarly reformer of the native tongue, and since Richelieu had established the Academy as a literary Areopagus. D'Urfé had after all only sought to domesticate in France a literary growth—that of the pastoral romance—already familiar to Italy and Spain, and to England likewise; and to substitute for the moribund romance of chivalry the romance of gallantry in a pastoral dress. The form which he had introduced was developed by subsequent writers, and Gomberville (born 1609) forms a kind of link between

Reaction towards refinement in higher French society and literature.

[1] These were the days of the *Tabarinades*, of which M. Ch. Louandre in his *Chefs d'Œuvre des Conteurs Français au XVII^me^ Siècle* has recently republished some specimens more diverting than edifying. A summary of parts of this volume by the author will be found in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, March 1st, 1874.

the romance of chivalry on the one hand, and the efforts of Calprenède and the Scudérys on the other[1]. In these authors, together perhaps with one or two others of less prominence, we have the typical representatives of that group of romance-writers which was to exercise so marked an influence upon the English drama of the latter half of the seventeenth century.

The salons of the Précieuses.

Nowhere was the tendency to take refuge in an imaginary world, and through its medium to view the actual, more likely to assert itself than in those circles where women of taste and accomplishments shone as the patronesses of literature and the leaders of fashion; and in the capital, at all events, ladies of a less elevated rank were certain to follow in the footsteps of their social superiors. From this period, as is well known, date the glories of those earliest of French *salons*, which exercised so notable an influence upon the literature as well as the social life of their age. Molière made immortal fun of the *précieuses;* but the enthusiasm of the fair sex has at all times been proof against the weapon most terrible to masculine intellects.

French romances of this age.

The typical romances of the species in question are, as observed, above all those of de la Calprenède (died 1663), of Georges de Scudéry (1601–1667), and of his sister Madeleine (1607–1701). Both the former two were also known as dramatists; but it is to their romances that I am at present adverting. Calprenède's famous productions of this kind are *Cléopatre*, *Cassandre*, and *Pharamond*. Georges de Scudéry produced *Lygdamon* and *L'Illustre Bassa*, the latter containing two episodes, *viz. Le Comte de Lavagne* (Fiesco) and *Mustapha et Zéangir*. His sister eclipsed the fame of these works by that of her *Artamène, ou Le Grand Cyrus*, followed by *Clélie* and *Almahide*. The scene of her last romance, *Mathilde d'Aguilar*, like *Almahide*, lay in part among the contests of the Christians with the Moors. Madame de la Fayette's (1634–1693) *La Princesse de Clèves* differs from the above-mentioned in

[1] Cf. Dunlop, *History of Fiction*, chap. x.

having at least some relation to historical fact. The popular works of the Abbé St. Réal (1639–1692) belong rather to the category of romantic history than to that of historical romance[1].

The chief characteristics of the most celebrated of these romances are generally supposed to be fairly reproduced in Boileau's satirical dialogue (*Les Héros de Roman*), which though described by himself as 'the least frivolous work which has yet proceeded from my pen,' he had the fine feeling not to publish till after the death of Mdlle. de Scudéry. Yet in fact Boileau, the good sense and the gay humour of whose Lucianic dialogue are alike remarkable, only directs his ridicule against particular features in these romances and in the dramas of a cognate type —above all against their reducing of the business of heroic life to the business of love-making, and the heroes of antiquity and history, whom they have substituted for D'Urfé's shepherds, to the level of these amorous pastoral swains[2]. These are certainly features which our dramatists

[1] The following are doubtless only a few instances out of many in which the English dramatists derived the subjects of their plays from these romances. On Gomberville's *Cléopatre* Mrs. Behn founded *The Young King* (1679) and Lee his *Gloriana, or The Court of Augustus*; from his *Pharamond* Lee took the plot of his *Theodosius, or The Force of Love*. From *Mustapha et Zéangir* Lord Orrery took the story of his *Mustapha*, and from *L'Illustre Bassa* was also taken Settle's *Ibrahim*. Calprenède's *Cassandre* supplied Banks with the story of his *The Rival Kings* (1677), and probably Lee with part of that of *The Rival Queens*. Dryden's *Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen* came from *Le Grand Cyrus*; his *Conquest of Granada* from *Almahide*, though for the character of Almanzor he was partly indebted to Calprenède. *Clélie* furnished Lee with part of the plot of his *Lucius Junius Brutus*, and *The Princess of Cleves* with that of his tragedy of the same name. Otway borrowed the stories of both his *Don Carlos* and his *Venice Preserved* from the Abbé de St. Réal.—Besides these adaptations, a translation, *Almahide, or The Captive* (1677), is mentioned as by J. Phillips, a nephew of Milton.

[2] The following passage is worthy of quotation, as containing the gist of a criticism which must be passed on a whole series of 'heroic plays:'

'*Pluton.* Et sont ce des Héros?

Diogène. Comment, si ce sont des Héros! Ce sont eux qui ont toujours le haut bout dans les Livres, et qui battent infalliblement les autres.

Pluton. Nomme m'en par plaisir quelques-uns.

Diogène. Volontiers. Orondate, Spitridate, Alcamène, Mélinte, Britomare, Merindor, Artaxandre, &c.

Pluton. Et tous ces Héros-là, ont-ils fait vœu comme les autres de ne jamais s'entretenir que d'Amour?

faithfully reproduced, when taking their plots from Calprenède's or Mdlle. de Scudéry's endless volumes. The heroes of more than one drama by Dryden or Lee inspire the feeling of wonder expressed by Boileau's Pluto when he declares it 'difficult to suppose that the Cyruses and Alexanders have suddenly, as I am informed they have, become Celadons and Thyrsises.' He likewise happily rallies the volubility as well as the flow of sentiment of these love-sick heroes and heroines. In judging of the reasons which produced the popularity of these romances, it should however be remembered that to their age they were not insipid as they are to us — inasmuch as many of the figures which we find devoid of interest were intended and accepted as portraits of living personages [1]. This gave a semblance of reality to the Romans and Orientals of Mdlle. de Scudéry which cannot be claimed for those of Lee or Dryden; nor should it be overlooked that the drama has claims, which do not arise in other kinds of literature, upon a certain degree of historic as well as of local propriety. In judging, on the other hand, of the qualities which entitle these works to a more respectful consideration than they usually receive from literary students, it should be pointed out that their morality appears to be pure and honourable; that the ethical problems they treat are not unreal like the heroic dress of the characters involved in them, and that these problems are often such as could only suggest themselves to refined minds, and their solutions such as could only commend themselves to writers with a social as well as a moral conscience. They are, to be sure, tedious enough with their men of honour, their heroic love, and their nice expositions of true gallantry; but their men of honour are chivalrous gentlemen who, though wearing the dress of ancient Romans or Turkish viziers or Frankish Kings, while using the language of the Court of Versailles, are animated

Diogène. Cela serait beau qu'ils ne l'eussent pas fait. Et de quel droit se disaient-ils Héros, s'ils n'étaient point amoureux? *N'est-ce pas l'Amour qui fait aujourd'hui la Vertu héroïque?*

[1] Dunlop, *u. s.*

by sentiments lying at the root of modern society; their heroic love is an honest and virtuous sentiment; and their gallantry is that tribute of respect to woman which, however it be expressed, leavens the manners and the morals of an age[1].

Relations between the French romances and the English drama.

It would have been well had our dramatists taken over into their plays more of the moral tendencies, and less of the mere externals, of these romances. They copied the interesting stories, the grand historic names, and the enchantingly distant scenes; they borrowed the high-sounding terms and phrases of heroic virtue and heroic love; they appropriated deeds of valour achieved on the grand scale of Artamenes, who exterminates a hundred-thousand men with his own hand in the course of a single novel[2]; and revelled in descriptions as detailed as that which in Boileau's Dialogue the voluble Sappho gives of 'the illustrious maiden'—Mdlle. de Scudéry herself. They were well content to seize upon plots, to transplant characters, and to copy phrases; but their views of morality and society were at best superficially coloured so as to agree with their models; in a word—with exceptions on which it is here unnecessary to dwell—they took what was extravagant and artificial because of its extravagance and artificiality, and cared little for applying it to any purpose but that of creating brilliant or striking effects. The novelists themselves are not necessarily to be judged by the use which was made of them[3]. In so far, however, as resort to these romances relieved our tragic dramatists from the temptation to seek for their plots in stories of loathsome intrigue or unnatural crime—the use which they made of the *romans de longue haleine* of Mdlle. de Scudéry

[1] For a fuller elucidation of the moral standpoint of these writers, Mdlle. de Scudéry in particular, see St. Marc Girardin, *Cours de Litt. Dram.* vol. iii. and iv. An analysis of the central idea of the *Princesse de Clèves* is given in the latter volume.

[2] The computation is Sir Walter Scott's. See his Introduction to Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada.*

[3] The use made by the English dramatists of these romances of course only added to the popularity which they enjoyed as works of fiction—in which shape they must long continued to have been 'épuisées' by fashionable ladies like Melantha in Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode* (see iii. 1).

and her contemporaries amounted to a negative benefit—and even in the midst of the tremendous situations, appropriately accompanied by the 'heroic' bombast, of a Dryden and a Lee, one breathes more freely than among the more real but likewise more repulsive conceptions of a Webster or a Ford.

The French drama of this period.

Of still greater significance for the history of our dramatic literature than this fashionable school of French romance is, however, the developement of the French drama itself in the middle and the later part of the seventeenth century. Much of the French drama of this age is indeed of essentially the same kind as the romance-literature to which I have just adverted, and as such fell under the censures of the same satirist. Calprenède, Georges de Scudéry, and those Obscure Ones whose memory survives in the Satires of Boileau, composed plays in which industrious enquiry might doubtless discover the originals of more than one English heroic play of the Restoration age. But I must confine my remarks to more accessible sources. Herein at least the age of Lewis XIV in France resembles the Periclean age of Athens: that in the drama it found not only its most brilliant but its most faithful representative. The classicism of Corneille and Racine is but pseudo-classical, and the supremacy claimed for their works among the master-pieces of modern dramatic art has long since been overthrown by a sounder criticism — but most assuredly their art could not have been what it was, or have exercised the influence which it did exercise, had it not been in true sympathy with the life of the nation and the age which it adorned. In the progress of the dramatic genius of Corneille may be traced the progress of the French nation from a period of struggles to one of monarchical order and grandeur; and Racine reflects the serene calm, satisfied with the acceptance of fixed forms and pervaded by the spirit of religiosity, which characterises settled periods of a national history. But though their sphere of ideas is thus not unreal, it is fatally limited to a range failing to comprehend the main currents of

Its relation to French national life.

ideas in even a single nation. The French tragedy of this period is the product of a Court, not of a people; and though the great master of contemporary French comedy, Molière, contrives to absorb in his art elements of a truly popular origin, as well as to assimilate foreign literary growths, he too lacks the full freedom of an art which associates its highest efforts with the impulses of national life.

Its exotic elements.

Viewed from without, the master-pieces of the French drama of this period necessarily commended themselves for imitation by those qualities and features which were imitable, not by those which were organically connected with the history and character of the nation whence it sprang. French tragedy borrowed its forms from classical antiquity, and laid down for itself a code of rules for most of which it claimed the incontrovertible sanction of classical authority. In truth, the theories which in his Essays on Dramatic Poetry—especially in that on *The Three Unities*—Corneille put forth as paramount, were published by him in his old age, when his creative powers had decreased and his greatest tragedies had long been before the world[1]. The 'heroic' or rhymed verse which Corneille's example established as the permanent form of French tragic poetry had been first authoritatively commended as the appropriate form of tragedy by Italian criticism[2], though it was the example of the French poets, as well as their practice, which introduced it to the notice of English dramatists. In comedy also Molière borrowed much from the Spaniards and the Italians, which thus reached our English literature at second-hand; and his debts to Latin comedy have probably been under- rather than over-rated.

Influence of the French upon the English drama.

In estimating the influence of the French dramatic literature of the seventeenth century upon our own, it is not sufficient to attempt the task—in itself almost endless—of tracing particular English plays to particular French

[1] They belong to the year 1659; *The Cid* had been produced in 1636, and followed by *Horace* (1639), *Cinna* (1639), and *Polyeucte* (1640).

[2] *viz.* in the prefatory discourse to Cardinal Pallavicino Sforza's *Erminigildo*. See H. Morley, *First Sketch*, &c., p. 634.

originals. A few data, designed to illustrate rather than exhaust this branch of the subject, are appended in a note [1].

[1] The chief French dramatists of the seventeenth century who come into question are Pierre Corneille (1606–1684); Philippe Quinault (1637–1688); Jean Racine (1639–1699); Thomas Corneille (1625–1709), and Jean François Regnard (1665–1709). Among the plays of these authors translated or reproduced by the English dramatists of this period were, in the case of Pierre Corneille, *Le Cid* (translated by Rutter); *Horace* and *Pompée* (translated by 'Orinda's matchless Muse,' *viz.* Mrs. Catharine Phillips; Crowne wrote a Prologue to her *Horace*, 1668–9); *Horace* (translated by Cotton); *Pompée*, translated by certain 'persons of honour,' including Waller, who contributed act i, and Buckhurst (afterwards Dorset), who contributed act iv. Cf. Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, where this translation is described as a powerful 'argument' in favour of verse; *Héraclius*, translated by Lodowick Carlell; *Nicomède*, translated by Cotton. Quinault's *Agrippa* was translated by Dancer; and his *L'Amour Indiscret* helped to supply the materials of (Newcastle and) Dryden's *Sir Martin Marall*. Racine's *Bérénice* was used by Otway for his *Titus and Berenice;* his *Iphigénie* was reproduced by Boyer under the title of *Achilles, or Iphigenia in Aulis* (1699), and his *Andromaque* is the original of Ambrose Philips' *The Distrest Mother* (1712). From his *Les Plaideurs* Wycherley in *The Plain Dealer* borrowed the famous character of the Widow Blackacre. Of Molière's plays (taking them in chronological order) I have noted the following translations or reproductions: *L'Etourdi* furnished the chief source of *Sir Martin Marall; Le Dépit Amoureux* contributed a scene to Dryden's *An Evening's Love* and part of the plot of Vanbrugh's *The Mistake; Les Précieuses Ridicules* suggested part of Shadwell's *Bury Fair;* a translation (in broken English) of *Sganarelle* constitutes act ii of Sir W. D'Avenant's *The Playhouse to be Let;* and the same play, besides being used for a comedy called *Tom Essence, or The Modish Wife* (1676), was translated by Vanbrugh; on *L'École des Maris* was partly founded Sir Charles Sedley's *The Mulberry Garden;* it was also used, together with *L'École des Femmes*, by Wycherley for his *The Country Wife;* to *Les Fâcheux* Shadwell was indebted for his *The Sullen Lovers, or The Impertinents; L'École des Femmes* was translated in 1671 by Pope's friend Caryl under the title of *Sir Solomon; La Critique de l'École des Femmes* furnished a scene to Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer; Le Mariage Forcé* supplied the greater part of Ravenscroft's *Scaramouch &c.* (1677); *Dom Juan, ou Le Festin de Pierre* (itself not original) suggested a situation in Cokain's *Ovid*, and doubtless also the general design of Shadwell's *The Libertine;* without *Le Misantrope* Wycherley would hardly have imagined his *The Plain Dealer; Le Sicilien, ou L'Amour Peintre* furnished an episode in the plot of Crowne's *The Country Wit; Le Tartuffe, ou L'Imposteur*, after being translated by Medbourne in 1670, suggested *The English Friar* of Crowne, besides more famous comedies of a date beyond the range of the present work; *Amphitrion* was known to Dryden, when writing his play of the same name; *L'Avare* suggested *The Miser* of Shadwell; *George Dandin, ou Le Mari Confondu* was adapted by Betterton under the title of *The Amorous Widow; Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (afterwards translated by Vanbrugh as *Squire Trelooby*) and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (under the title of *The Citizen turned Gentleman*) were reproduced by Ravenscroft in 1671 and 1672;

But while neither translations nor adaptations could reproduce in the English language the outward form of the master-pieces of French tragedy and comedy, it was possible to borrow subjects, plots and characters, but not to transplant the spirit of either the serious or the comic drama of contemporary France.

Rhyme in French and in English tragedy.

In form, as will be seen, French tragedy suggested the substitution of rhyme for blank-verse to Lord Orrery and others, above all to Dryden, whose master-hand alone could ensure even temporary success to so hopeless an experiment. For a time, with the support of the personal taste of King Charles II, the innovation maintained itself; when Dryden announced his intention to abandon it[1], the practice was doomed; and even before this it is treated with undisguised ridicule by a leading comic dramatist[2]. There is no necessity in this place to refer to the arguments urged for and against it, which will be briefly noticed below. It proved impossible permanently to domesticate in English tragedy a form differing from that which it had adopted as its own, and into English comedy no attempt was made to introduce it. But in truth the rhymed couplets of Dryden and his followers are something very different from the Alexandrines of Corneille, Racine, and Molière. The latter merely dignify and refine the style of polite conversation and courtly speech; the former not only modify expression, but change the tone

Les Fourberies de Scapin was reproduced by Otway as *The Cheats of Scapin; Psiche* was, though only very partially, used by Shadwell in his play of the same name; and *Le Malade Imaginaire*, together with *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, helped Mrs. Behn in the composition of her comedy of *Sir Patient Fancy*. To these may be added (besides two of Scarron's (1610–1660) plays which served D'Avenant for the composition of *The Man's the Master*) Thomas Corneille's *Le Feint Astrologue* (from Calderon), which Dryden adapted as *An Evening's Love, or The Mock Astrologer; Le Menteur*, from which Steele took his *The Lying Lover;* and Regnard's *Le Joueur*, from which Mrs. Centlivre took her *The Gamester*.

[1] In 1678. For details see the remarks on Dryden below.

[2] In Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer* (ii. 1), produced in 1674, Novel says that he counselled the author of *The Country Wife* (*i. e.* Wycherley himself) 'to put his play into rhyme; for rhyme, you know, often makes mystical nonsense pass with the critics for wit, and a double-meaning saying with the ladies for soft, tender and moving passion.'

of thought. It would not be easy to find any satisfactory reason for this difference in the nature of 'heroic' verse itself; for it was of course not antecedently necessary that this English metre should stereotype itself into the form given to it by Waller, Dryden, and Pope. But a poetic form, like a poetic species, cannot do violence to its history; and the English heroic couplet, when it was used by Dryden for the drama, had already become radically unsuitable for such an application.

The spirit of French tragedy not communicated to English.

While imitating the form of the master-pieces of French tragedy the English dramatists proved incapable of borrowing their spirit. Already Corneille lives in a world of sentiment appropriate to the society in and for which he wrote; the chivalrous pride and the passionate resolution of his earlier heroes and heroines give way before the demands of the public good, and the sanctity of authority in Church and State is the Destiny which rules his tragic ends[1]. Racine is the representative of an age in which a glorious Order seems to have been established, and in which men and women may give themselves up to the study of the emotions of the heart. The reaction of which I spoke above[2] has reached its climax, and the tenderest of human feelings has become the absorbing theme of tragic poetry. At the same time Racine represents in their full influence the refinement and the dignity of manner cultivated in the sphere in which he moved, and the reverential attitude towards religious and monarchical authority which was its primary law. The tragic poets of the English Restoration period are in general strangers to the tone, the taste, and the moral spirit of Racine. Heroic virtue and heroic love are their themes as well as his; but, unlike him, they have little thought of investing the one with courtly dignity and representing the other as at once delicate and pure. They at once lower the passion which like him they are content to make the prevailing motive of their conceptions, and in seeking to give their pictures of it an impressive force,

[1] See a striking passage in Hettner, *Literaturgeschichte des* 18. *Jahrh.* ii. 10.

[2] *Ante*, p. 467.

take refuge in an expedient which he altogether scorns — in bombast. So little of what is essential in the spirit and manner of French tragedy is really assimilated by the English writers, that the resemblance of subjects and the adoption of rules affecting the construction and conduct of dramatic actions become unimportant in comparison.

The spirit and manner of Molière imperfectly communicated to English comedy.

In the case of comedy, the difference is not so absolute, but it is equally noticeable. Molière was copied by our English dramatists more unscrupulously than probably any other writer before or since; but neither his spirit nor his manner descended to his copyists. Both indeed vary to a great extent in his several works. He was the inheritor of the traditions of the New Greek comedy and of those of French farce; he was both a satirist and a humourist; he at times displays the sentiments of a loyal courtier, at others that gay spirit of Opposition which is all but indispensable to a popular French wit. His comedies range from elaborate and subtle pictures of human character in its eternal types to lively sketches of social follies and literary extravagances, and broad appeals to the ordinary sources of vulgar merriment. Within the limits of artistic taste, his style suits itself to every one of these species. And his morality, it must be allowed, is as flexible as his genius where it comes into contact with the chief social weakness of his age. Molière may with equal success be shown to be an advocate and a mocker of the sanctity of the institution of marriage; and if he defends it directly, he certainly indirectly helps to make it ridiculous.

English comedy in this period, which in spite of the pleasing illusions to the contrary in which genial critics have indulged is a comedy of actualities, strengthened itself by the influence of Molière in more than one direction. Without the help of his light and perspicuous plots it would have probably continued to resort more largely to those Spanish models in which the conduct of a complicated intrigue absorbs attention. Without the suggestive variety and the human truthfulness of some of his

most powerful characters it might have continued to ring the changes on a more restricted number of types, or have altogether abandoned the endeavour to draw various characters in favour of the easier task—to which it was so strongly inclined — of painting only the follies and the foibles, the manners and the men, of its own age. While giving, in accordance with the genius of the nation to which they belonged, a more realistic colouring to his characters, the English comic dramatists substituted for the often reckless gaiety of Molière's dialogue a much grosser salt—at times a mere pretence of salt—of their own[1]. The brilliant style of Congreve and his contemporaries belongs to a later period, and is not imitated from Molière[2]. Of his morality our later comedy in general only borrowed what suited it and its public—*viz.* the loosest moods. But it would be monstrous to hold Molière responsible for the sins of which our comic drama made itself guilty in this respect.

In addition to these literary influences, it is finally necessary to note that the progress of our drama was affected by tastes, likewise imported from abroad, but easily commending themselves to a public always ready in such matters to be guided by its neighbours.

The Opera. The history of the Opera is interesting to the student of English dramatic literature from two points of view only. Few English dramatic works possessing any literary importance can be described as contributions to this hybrid species; and those which rather contain operatic elements, than constitute operas properly so called, are in general likewise productions of little permanent literary value. On the other hand, the Opera usurped so large a share of

[1] By way of illustration, *Le Dépit Amoureux*, iv. 3, may be compared with the scene borrowed from it in Dryden's *An Evening's Love* (also iv. 3).

[2] Perhaps, however, the example of Molière and French dramatic literature in general may have encouraged a tendency to greater length of dialogue than was usual in our earlier writers. Already D'Avenant (*The Play-House to be Let*, act i) makes the Player say:

> 'The French convey their arguments too much
> In dialogue: their speeches are too long,'

and contrast this feature with the narrowness of their plots.

fashionable favour that the progress of the English drama could not fail to be affected by the success of this foreign growth within the walls of English theatres; and the complaints of our dramatists are both loud and deep as to the difficulty they experienced in maintaining a struggle against it.

Italian Opera

Italian tragedy seems from the first to have followed the example of the ancients in including a musical element —but this remained purely accessory in its nature until towards the close of the sixteenth century the experiment was first made of producing a dramatic work the whole of which had been written to be sung[1]. The lyrical passages were connected with one another by speeches and dialogues written in what was called the *stilo recitativo;* and aided by the splendour of decorations and machinery, the new species flourished in Italy throughout the seventeenth century, and has, with modifications of no essential importance, endured to our own days.

in England.

The Italian Opera proper only came to England at a late date—about the beginning of the eighteenth century —and in such a form that all the force of fashion was needed to ensure it a welcome. But our 'tramontane taste,' as Colley Cibber calls it[2], tolerated its introduction 'in a lame hobbling Translation into our own Language, with false Quantities, or Metre out of Measure, to its original Notes, sung by our own unskilful Voices, with Graces misapply'd to almost every Sentiment, and with Action, lifeless and unmeaning, through every character.' Soon it became usual to allow Italian singers, 'qualified for the Opera' or otherwise, to sing in their native tongue, and the rage for these entertainments, fostered by judicious management, increased. The genius of a great German musician was employed to compose operas, generally written in English and translated into Italian; and in

[1] The *Daphne* of Ottario Rinuccini, with whom co-operated three musicians, Peri, Giucopo Corsi, and Caccini, is regarded by Sismondi (*Lit. of the South of Europe*, i. 469) as the first Italian opera. Its date is 1594 or 1597. For a fuller account of Rinuccini's efforts see Klein, v. 523 *seqq.*

[2] *Apology*, p. 262.

spite of the protestations of some English dramatists[1], and with the aid of others[2], a species which can hardly be made the subject of remark from the point of view of literary criticism continued to flourish at the close of the period now under survey.

French Opera.

But before the Italian Opera thus challenged the competition of the English drama on its own boards, the latter had been largely influenced by it indirectly. The Opera established its popularity in France in the latter half of the seventeenth century, particularly under the influence of the Italian musician Lulli[3] (1633–1687) and the French dramatist Quinault (1637–1688). The favour obtained by the entertainments produced by them caused French dramatists of the highest mark—the elder as well as the younger Corneille and Molière—to essay the same species of composition; and under the influence of these examples it found its way into English dramatic literature. The accidental circumstance that during the period immediately preceding the Restoration the ingenuity of D'Avenant was in search of some kind of entertainment

[1] These are far too numerous to cite; but mention may be made of one of the most elaborate among them, John Dennis' *Essay on the Operas after the Italian Manner, which are about to be establish'd on the English Stage. With some Reflections on the Damage which they may bring to the Publick* (1706). It will be noticed that in his Preface Dennis declares his strictness to be directed only against those Operas which are entirely Musical, 'for those which are Dramatical may be partly defended by the Example of the Antients.' He argues that Operas have everywhere driven out poetry—so in Italy and in France. Music, he says—and surely with truth—is 'not subservient to Reason.' Opera entertainments infuse no generous sentiments or thoughts—if an opera is to do this, it must be writ with Force. But this is incompatible with music, 'especially in so masculine a language as ours.' He goes on to argue with much vigour that in itself 'an Opera after the Italian fashion is monstrous . . . in Italy however 'tis a beautiful harmonious Monster, but here in England 'tis an ugly howling one . . . . England may produce the greatest Tragick poets in Europe, but there is scarce one Nation in the Christian world, but is qualified to surpass us in Operas. The very nations from whom we have taken the Opera will despise us in consequence.'

[2] *e.g.* Vanbrugh and Congreve opened the Haymarket Theatre with Owen McSwiney's *Camilla*, a translated Italian Opera, in 1706; Aaron Hill wrote *Rinaldo* (1711), for which Handel composed the music.

[3] 'Tous ces lieux communs de Morale lubrique,
Que Lulli réchauffa des sons de sa Musique.'
Boileau, *Satire X.*

English Opera.

which while containing dramatic elements should not be absolutely dramatic, hurried the invasion. And the fact that on the re-opening of the theatres English composers of great talent eagerly welcomed the opportunity of applying their art in the direction of dramatic illustration, made the transition easy from the drama embellished with musical compositions to the drama intended to be either altogether sung, or to resemble the opera in the style even of those parts which were to be spoken. The varieties of this period of 'English opera' are accordingly many, and it is hardly worth while to attempt an accurate distinction between them. Thus, Purcell wrote music for Lee's *Theodosius* and for adaptations of Fletcher's *The Prophetess* and of Shakspere's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Lock similarly illustrated D'Avenant's adaptation of *Macbeth.* Of the opera in a stricter sense Dryden's *Albion and Albanius* (1685) may be regarded as an example; and in the Preface to this production Dryden attempts a definition of the species. He there characterises an opera as 'a poetical tale, or fiction, represented by vocal and instrumental music, adorned with scenes, machines, and dances,' and adds that 'the persons of this musical drama are generally supernatural. On the other hand, George Granville (Lord Lansdowne) in the Preface to his *The British Enchanters, or No Magick like Love*[1] (1706), which is described as 'a Dramatick Poem with Scenes, Machines, Musick and Decorations,' &c., recommends that 'the Dialogue, which in the French and Italian is set to notes, and sung,' should be 'pronounced; if the numbers are of themselves harmonious, there will be no need of Musick to set them off.' Such influence as the opera exercised upon the character of our dramatic literature—especially

[1] This opera is generally agreeable in versification (it contains by the bye a passage which is a reminiscence of Dryden's *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, and two to which Pope can hardly have been a stranger), but the treatment of the story (which introduces a good enchanter and a bad enchantress—Urganda—and Amadis of Gaul to boot) is commonplace.—Among later operas, Addison's *Rosamond* (1707) may be mentioned for the sake of its author's name, to which however it adds little lustre. Its short lines lilt along with fatal facility.

upon those branches of it which contained an imaginative element—could only be in one direction. Combining the artificialities of the mask and the pastoral with conventional impossibilities of its own, and trusting for effect to the adjuncts of action and poetry rather than to action and poetry themselves, the opera furnished an evil example to those dramatists who, while seeking their effects outside the domain of the actual, wilfully neglected to limit them to the domain of the real. With his usual recklessness, Dryden was not more proof against this temptation than his less gifted contemporaries; though his genius made it impossible for him even to err without splendour. In general, the influence of the tendencies encouraged by the example of the opera was an altogether pernicious one upon the general progress of those departments of our dramatic literature which were affected by it,—and hardly any escaped it altogether[1].

The Ballet.

The above quotations illustrate one other circumstance to which it is necessary to advert. The adjunct of music was by no means the only one which the drama of this period called in to its aid. Together with the opera, the ballet had become a favourite entertainment of the French Court, having been likewise introduced from Italy, the true home of pantomimic dance. It commended itself with the utmost rapidity[2] to the tastes of the English Court and of the

[1] It may be incidentally noticed that the taste for the introduction of occasional lyrics into plays continued after the Restoration. These songs were collected both before and after the re-opening of the theatres under the generic title of *Drolleries*. See the Introduction to Ebsworth's edition of the *Westminster Drolleries* of 1671 and 1672—a sufficiently characteristic collection of what is mostly trash.

[2] Already in 1663 Dryden says (iii. 1):

'The poetry of the foot takes most of late;'

and in *The Play-House to be Let* D'Avenant (act i) makes the Dancing-Master distinguish from historical dancing—

'down-right plain history
Exprest in figures on the floor, a kind
Of morals in dumb-shows by men and beasts'—

from what the player facetiously calls 'high history upon ropes.' The representative of the latter, Jacob Hall, is one of the best-known figures of Grammont's gallery.

public influenced by them—and soon became a favourite expedient for enhancing the effects of operatic or quasi-operatic dramas, as well as for furnishing an agreeable *intermezzo* or termination in comedy. Indeed there soon is hardly a comic drama which fails to introduce the 'dancers,' without taking much heed to connect them more than nominally with the action. Finally, the practice of employing regular scenes[1], and the developement of theatrical machinery of all kinds, together with an increasing taste for brilliancy and magnificence in the externals of dress, contributed to influence the style of dramatic composition; and the modern practice of 'revivals' of plays—*i.e.* of their representation under conditions commending them by attractions not wholly confined to the actor's art—dates from the age of the Restoration[2].

Adaptations of earlier English plays.

And this leads me in conclusion to remind the reader that the dramatic literature of this period could no more than the stage itself dissociate itself from the antecedents of the national drama. We shall see to what extent the writers of the later Stuart times succeeded or failed in reconciling the influences of foreign literatures and the tendencies of their own age with the traditions of the old English drama. Its master-pieces in their original form were indeed regarded as savouring of the obsolete[3]; but in tragedy and in comedy alike the adaptations of old English plays constitute no inconsiderable proportion of the dramatic works of the age. Those of Shaksperean dramas have been already noticed[4]; but in addition to

[1] See below as to D'Avenant's *The Siege of Rhodes.*

[2] The taste for magnificence of dress was of course in part due to the fact that there were now actresses as well as actors on the stage.

[3] See the passage in Evelyn's *Diary*, Nov. 26th, 1661, cited by Sir Walter Scott in his *Essay on the Drama*: 'I saw *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, played, but now the old plays began to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty's being so long abroad.'

[4] Cf. vol. i. p. 288. Besides the adaptations there noticed, may be mentioned D'Avenant's *Macbeth*; Shadwell's *Timon of Athens*; Otway's *Caius Marius* (a barefaced theft from *Romeo and Juliet*); James Howard's *Romeo and Juliet* (in which the lovers are kept alive); Ravenscroft's *Titus Andronicus* (1678); Tate's *King Lear* (1681); Betterton's *Henry IV* (1700).

these, Chapman [1], Beaumont and Fletcher [2], Webster [3], and others [4] were either adapted or otherwise turned to account. That this was the case, is the reverse of surprising; but the fact could not be passed by in this preliminary attempt to indicate the various influences at work in the period of dramatic literature under review.

Dramatists who wrote both before the Revolution and after the Restoration.

Milton.

Of the writers who had contributed to our dramatic literature before the outbreak of the Civil Troubles only a few survived their close, and fewer were found ready to resume their old labours in the new times. To the eloquent and touching poetic protest which in his solitude MILTON uttered against the victory of the Philistines I have already adverted [5]. As a note of warning *Samson Agonistes* necessarily passed unheeded, though it still speaks to the historic conscience of the nation. Another great name—not towering in its eminence like Milton's, but rising far above the ordinary crowd of the literary adherents of the royal cause—was to receive fresh lustre in the years succeeding the Restoration. As a dramatist,

Cowley.

however, COWLEY only produced one work in his later years, and even this was merely a new version of a piece written by him in those jovial Cambridge days to which we owe the humorous Latin play already described [6]. *The Guardian* had been acted at Cambridge in 1641–2; had been published in 1650, and, according to the author's own

[1] Tate's *Cuckolds' Haven* (1685) is from *Eastward Ho.*

[2] D'Avenant's *The Rivals* is from *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and the bye-plot of his *The Siege* from *The Humorous Lieutenant;* Waller altered *The Maid's Tragedy* (1682), Betterton *The Prophetess* (1690), Vanbrugh *The Pilgrim* (1700), D'Urfey *The Sea Voyage* (1685), Tate *The Island Princess* (1687); *The Wild-Goose-Chase* is the original of Farquhar's *The Inconstant.*

[3] Betterton adapted *Appius and Virginia* as *The Roman Virgin* (1679).

[4] Leanard worked on materials from Brewer and Middleton (Dibdin, iv. 144); Ravenscroft produced parts of a comedy by Davenport (*ib.* 131), whose *The City Night-Cap* was adapted by Mrs. Behn in *The Amorous Prince* (1671). Of older plays she adapted *Lust's Dominion* as *Abdelazar*, Wilkins' *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage* as *The Town Fop* (1677), and Middleton's *A Mad World, my Masters* as *The City Heiress* (1682).—The subject at all events of Marlowe's tragedy served the dramatist Mountfort for his *Doctor Faustus* (cf. Geneste, i. 450).

[5] *Ante*, p. 381.

[6] *Ante*, p. 369.

account, several times acted in private during the troubles. Much however must have been re-written to suit the time in which the action of *Cutter of Coleman Street*[1] (as the new version is called) was laid, and the special significance with which its chief comic characters, Cutter and Worm, were invested. The comedy, as acted in 1661, seems to have subjected Cowley to attacks as having been intended for abuse and satire of the Royalists, and as guilty of profaneness. In his Preface, which is well worth reading, he accordingly defends himself with effective indignation against both charges—and this he could upon the whole well afford to do. What enraged these injudicious censurers, proves to us the moral courage of the poet. It was a real service to the cause of the monarchy and of society at large for a tried friend of the former thus boldly and bravely to satirise the vile excrescences of the loyal party at the very time when that party was uppermost; and there is a spirit of manliness in this comedy for the sake of which we may readily pardon its occasional coarseness and the farcical improbabilities of its plot[2].

His Cutter of Coleman Street (1661).

Among writers of lesser note who composed plays both before and after the Restoration SIR WILLIAM D'AVENANT may here receive final mention. The works produced by him after the stage for which he had laboured with so much courage and zeal had been once more restored to honour need not, however, detain us long. *The Siege of Rhodes*, which had been brought out as an entertainment

Sir William D'Avenant's later plays.

The Siege of Rhodes (1656 and 1662).

[1] Printed in vol. ii of *The Works of Mr. Abraham Cowley* (3 vols. 1710–1). 'Cutter' signifies swaggerer.

[2] The freshness and indeed boisterousness of the writing of this comedy, as well as the extravagance of its plot, betray its early origin. But in the chief characters there is considerable humour. Cutter and Worm are two swaggerers who conceal their vagabond characters under cover of their devotion to the good cause. To further their purposes, they are quite ready to ruin one another or to perpetrate any horrible deed:—Cutter even marries the daughter of a saint and soap-boiler, betokening his transitory conversion to a Puritan frame of mind by announcing a series of visions, of which the most striking is the 'return' of himself and Tabitha on a Purple Dromedary. Colonel Jolly too, though his manners are little better than his morals, and his facetious daughter Aurelia are drawn fresh from life. In the sentimental characters, Young Truman and Lucia, there are touches of pathos from which an inferior and less self-confident hand would perhaps have shrunk.

of scenery and music in 1656, was now elaborated in form; a Second Part (divided, unlike the first, into acts and scenes) was added, and both were performed in 1662, and printed in the following year. The interest attaching to this production is historical only; but while *The Siege of Rhodes* will always be gratefully remembered on account of the courage and opportune ingenuity displayed in its original production, a melancholy interest attaches to it as the first attempt at English opera. An enquiry into the nature of the scenery employed in it must be left to theatrical antiquarians[1]; with regard to its literary characteristics, it may perhaps be favourably compared with many modern opera-texts, which in several ways it strikingly resembles. The dialogue is partly in heroic couplets, partly in short rhymed lines; and surely the latter only can have been given *recitativo*. Part II, which does not appear to have been successful, contains however some vigorous lines, and has a good Epilogue. When this and the ingenuity of the author in introducing some patriotic flourishes into the play[2] have been acknowledged, all has been said that can be said in favour of this early relic of a long-lived false taste.

The Siege (acted by 1660; pr. 1673).

From this opera must be distinguished another of D'Avenant's plays which was likewise acted at the Cockpit on the eve of the Restoration, but which I have reserved for notice here. *The Siege* (first printed in the folio of 1673) is a romantic drama, very straightforward and accordingly effective in the character of its main-plot,—the story of a brave maiden who by refusing to sanction the treason committed for her sake by her lover, invites him to desperate heroism[3]. The bye-plot, though not wholly original, is carried on with some humour[4].

[1] So far as one can gather, it appears to have consisted of great single backgrounds painted panorama-wise, and frequently changed. Thus we have represented 'the true prospect of the city of Rhodes,' 'the prospect of Mount Philermus,' with Solyman's army in the plain below, &c., &c.

[2] *e.g.*: 'For what will not the valiant English do,
When beauty is distress'd and virtue too?' (*Part I.*)

[3] This obviously suggested the plot of Hughes' *The Siege of Damascus* (1720).

[4] It is in part borrowed from Fletcher's *The Humorous Lieutenant* (*ante*,

After the Restoration D'Avenant seems to have become inclined to sink the author in the manager, and to have contented himself in the main with dressing up old productions of his own, or adapting to dominant tastes the labours of others. His *The Playhouse to be Let* (acted probably about 1663) is a comic entertainment composed of a series of more or less heterogeneous materials—'four plays in one,' as they would have been called in the days of Beaumont and Fletcher[1]—tied together by a device familiar enough to the modern stage[2]. The opening and the closing act alone were both new and—after their fashion—original. *The Man's the Master* (acted 1668, printed 1669), a lively comedy chiefly in prose, appears to be in subject, and partly in language, borrowed from two French comedies[3]. The rest of D'Avenant's productions are mere alterations of master-pieces of our own drama; *The Rivals* (acted and printed 1668) being a free adaptation of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*[4]; and *Macbeth* (printed 1673) an adulteration of Shakspere, for which Lock composed the music[5]. Finally, it was D'Avenant who invented,

The Playhouse to be Let (1663 *circ.*)

Adaptations of old plays.

p. 208). Though the notion might have advantageously been left unrepeated, the scenes in which the vainglory of the volunteers is exposed are not unamusing. The caricature of a duel in act iv is worthy of notice; and altogether it is clear that this play was written at a time when the shady sides of soldiering had become tolerably well manifest.

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 192.

[2] A series of competitors for a vacant theatre present in turn their several performances. Two of the entertainments in question (which occupy acts ii and iv) were operas already produced by D'Avenant at the Cockpit before the Restoration (cf. *ante*, p. 477). Act ii is a translation (in broken English) of Molière's *Sganarelle (le Cocu Imaginaire)*. Act v is a burlesque on the loves of Antony and Cleopatra which is quite equal in the broad vulgarity of its buffoonery to the efforts of later competitors. I quote a specimen, to show that in one branch of the drama the style of humour is permanent:

'*Cleopatra:* I'll not be scar'd, though he look ne'er so hideous;
He may go snick-up, if he hates Nymphidius.'

[3] Scarron's *Jodelet, ou le Maistre Valet*, and the same author's *L'Héritier ridicule.*

[4] The 'parcel-gilt' entertainment of the huntsmen in act iv is an original insertion by D'Avenant.

[5] Cf. vol. i. p. 415. I learn on excellent authority, that the music to *Macbeth* by Lock was different from that popularly called by his name, and is not known to exist.—D'Avenant's (or presumably his) *Macbeth* delighted the soul of Pepys, who describes it as 'a most excellent play in all respects, but especially in divertissement, though it be a deep tragedy; which is a strange perfection in

though it was Dryden who carried out, the idea of 'the counterpart of Shakspere's plot' in *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* (acted 1667 and printed 1674), already noticed[1], and enumerated below among Dryden's dramatic works.

D'Avenant's position in our dramatic literature.

Soon after the production of this strange monument of a perverted ingenuity, D'Avenant died—in the year 1668. Although, in taking leave of him, it is impossible to echo the particular tribute to his 'quick and piercing imagination' with which Dryden commended their joint production to his readers, yet we may in some degree share the 'gratitude' professed by the younger and greater writer for the memory of the elder. Dryden's praise of D'Avenant cannot be acknowledged true, that 'he borrowed not of any other; and his imaginations were such as could not easily enter into any other man[2].' But, with all his faults and worse than faults, D'Avenant remains the chief connecting link between two periods of our dramatic literature, both of which had their faults and vices like himself, but of which the later derived the best and truest part of its vitality from the earlier. Thus it would be not less unjust than ungenerous to forget his services to a cause which he had loyally at heart, and which but for him might have sunk into still more abject hopelessness, and have recovered itself under conditions even less favourable to its national character. The English drama owes to D'Avenant more than one doubtful gift; but it also owes to him in some degree the endurance, under however perverted a form, of a love for its great masters, and the maintenance of such historic continuity as it was able to preserve[3].

Other names—but so far as their dramatic writings are

a tragedy, it being most proper here, and suitable.' *Diary*, Jan. 7th, 1667. I am by the bye unable to say whether D'Avenant ever actually produced another play to which Pepys (see *Diary*, Nov. 10th, 1663) looked forward with guileless joy, 'a rare play to be acted this week of Sir William D'Avenant's. The story of Henry the Eighth with all his wives.'

[1] Vol. i. p. 288, note 1.

[2] See the Preface to *The Tempest* in Dryden's *Works*.

[3] Sir William D'Avenant's son Charles wrote one 'tragedy,' *Circe* (1677), of which I can furnish no account. It is described by Geneste (i. 209) as more properly an opera, and founded on the *Iphigenia in Tauris* of Euripides.

concerned, to most of us names only—connecting together the dramatic literature of the pre- and post-Restoration periods are those of the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE and his DUCHESS[1], and of LORD FALKLAND[2], the son of the hero of the Civil War in its earliest days. Sir Samuel Tuke, Sir Richard Fanshawe, and George Digby Earl of Bristol have already been mentioned in a different connexion[3]; none of them came before the public as original dramatists. It is more to the purpose, before passing to writers less intimately connecting themselves with pre-Restoration developements of our drama, to dwell for a moment on one who, though none of his works were published before the Restoration, must assuredly be characterised as an aftergrowth of an older school. Among all our Restoration dramatists none—except perhaps Shadwell—could have so justly claimed, had the spirit of Jonson revisited his ancient haunts, to be 'sworn of the tribe of Ben' as JOHN WILSON[4], whose till recently forgotten name deserves to be commended to the esteem of the lovers of ripe wit and genuine dramatic power.

Other dramatists who wrote both before and after the Restoration.

John Wilson (died 1666).

From a contemporary doggrel it would appear that

[1] The Duke of Newcastle, whose name has occurred repeatedly in these volumes since it was first mentioned as that of one of Ben Jonson's patrons, survived till 1676, the Duchess till 1674. The former wrote four comedies, which Dibdin (iv. 128) calls 'passable' and which Geneste (who describes them x. 73–5 *et al.*) says 'ought not to have been forgotten.' Besides these, he translated *L'Étourdi* of Molière, which Dryden converted into the comedy of *Sir Martin Mar-All* (cf. *infra*). Other dramatists appear to have derived some of their materials from the Duke's plays; but none of the latter attained, like his treatise on horsemanship, commemorated by Dr. Johnson, to an enduring fame. The Duchess is variously stated to have written 19 and 27 plays—the difference perhaps arising from the circumstance that some of them were in two Parts. One of them, *The Blazing World*, appears to have been left unfinished; in another, *The Unnatural Tragedy*, a whole scene is said to have been directed against Camden's *Britannia*. Cf. Dibdin, iv. 129, and a paper on *The Duchess of Newcastle* in *The Retrospective Review*, vol. i (1853). Mr. Jenkins (*The Cavalier and his Lady*, p. 27) says that the Duchess' plays 'only serve to show how incapable she was of good dramatic writing.'

[2] He died in 1663; and in the following year was published his tragedy of *The Marriage Night*, which is said in the *Biographia Dramatica* to 'contain a great deal of true wit and satire.'

[3] *Ante*, pp. 464, 465.

[4] *The Dramatic Works of John Wilson. With Memoir, &c.* (By James Maidment and W. H. Logan.) 1874.

Wilson was a Scotchman; and there are one or two indications of a connexion with Scotland in his plays. He is known to have been called to the bar from Lincoln's Inn in 1646; and is supposed afterwards to have become secretary in Ireland to the Duke of York, through whose influence he was, shortly before the death of Charles II, appointed Recorder of Londonderry. After the famous siege he appears to have moved to Dublin, where he resided for some years. He died—in London—in 1696. He composed some legal and political works, and translated the *Encomium Moriae* of Erasmus. Of his intimate acquaintance with legal phraseology he gives amusing evidence in one of his plays[1]; and altogether his wit, like Jonson's own, is that of a man of learning.

His comedies.

In his comedies of *The Cheats* (written 1662) and *The Projectors* (printed 1664) Wilson shows himself a follower of Jonson, indeed the latter contains evident reminiscences of *The Devil is an Ass*, to the plot of which that of his *Belphegor* has likewise some resemblance. Wilson has much of the learning, the wit, and the power of clear and vigorous characterisation which belonged to the great master—but he has also some of Jonson's lengthiness and excessive copiousness of prose diction; and perhaps these two plays are more enjoyable in reading than they might prove on the stage. *The Cheats* however was very popular. The plot of neither comedy is worthy of praise; their strength lies in the characters, some of which are excellent: thus in *The Cheats* the astrological quack Mopus, and more especially the dissenting minister Scruple,—a caricature which in his preface the author vigorously defends as directed only against the 'abuse of the venerable name' of religion[2].

The Cheats (1662).

[1] *The Cheats.*

[2] Scruple among the admiring women of his congregation, solacing, not himself, but 'the creature' from a 'scandalous' bowl which 'looketh like a wassail,' and consenting to conform for a living of £300 a year, till he is induced to come back to his flock for £400 ('Let a man strive never so much against it, natural affection will return upon him') and sell the good-will of his living (not the living itself—for 'I remember me, the Casuists make a notable difference'),—is certainly as diverting and vigorous a piece of satire as any branch of our literature has produced, and reminds us that we are in the days of *Hudibras*.

In *The Projectors*, where the fun is not quite so broad, we have a number of adventurers of this class, who work upon the folly of Sir Gudgeon Credulous, and a usurer Suckdry, whose love and fear for his gold and treatment of his unhappy servant Leanchops are however not original features[1]. In any case Wilson has the credit of having introduced the admirable addition to Jonson's character-types of the Miser on the English stage. He has further added a burlesque woman's rights' meeting, which is very ludicrous, and was doubtless suggested by Aristophanes.

The Projectors (pr. 1644).

Besides these two admirable comedies, Wilson wrote a tragedy, *Andronicus Comnenius* (printed 1664), and a tragi-comedy, *Belphegor, or The Marriage of the Devil* (printed 1691). The former, felicitous in choice of subject, is written with great vigour and spirit; and though in one scene the author is guilty of very gross plagiarism, the scenes among the citizens, the character of Philo, Andreas' zany (who acts as jackal to the lion, and resembles the Moor in Schiller's *Fiesco*), and the finely-conceived character of Manuel, the usurper's virtuous son, are as original as they are excellent[2]. *Belphegor* is the least interesting of Wilson's plays, though likewise closely connecting itself with our earlier drama (it is in fact nothing but a more elaborate —and very well written—version of a theme with which we

His Andronicus Comnenius (pr. 1664).

His Belphegor, or The Marriage of the Devil (pr. 1691).

[1] They are of course borrowed from the *Aulularia*. I see no reason to suppose that Wilson was acquainted with Molière's *L'Avare* (not actually *known* to have been performed before 1668); but the near coincidence of date is certainly suspicious. Had Wilson borrowed from Molière, he would surely have made more of the scene (ii. 1) where Suckdry thinks he has lost his gold.

[2] 'The genuine adventures' of Andronicus Comnenius, says Gibbon (chap. xlviii), 'might form the subject of a very singular romance.' The theme seems to have been treated (in 1661) by another dramatist before Wilson. He has only treated the latter part of the strange story, which certainly bears a remarkable likeness to that of Richard III, whom Andronicus resembled both in his ruthless ambition and in his capacity for government. An imitation of Shakspere was therefore not easily to be avoided—but except in the scene where Andronicus makes love to Anna, the widow of his victim, Wilson cannot be said to have resorted to imitation.—The political allusions in this play the author does not seem to have desired to conceal (see the Dedication): those in iv. 4 are interesting, where the hole-and-corner 'constituent assembly' mania of the period just preceding the Restoration is manifestly pointed at.

are already familiar from *Grim the Collier of Croydon*[1]. Wilson however, as he tells us, took the story from Machiavelli. He has given some relief to this fantastically humorous fiction by the nobly-conceived characters of Montalto and his wife Portia.

Wilson's sterling merits as a dramatist.

Wilson seems to have made little pretension to the title of a dramatist[2]; but he had both the necessary gifts and the necessary application; and of him too Ben Jonson might have said that he 'writes all like a man.' He shows originality even where he borrows his themes; he draws character with clearness and strength; and the manliness of his serious as well as of his comic writing refreshes and invigorates the student of the literary period in which, unfortunately perhaps for his literary reputation, it was his lot to live. Of poetic ornament he is bare; but he is equally free from meretricious glitter and artificiality. Had he been born a generation earlier, and fallen in with the strong current of a dramatically creative age, he might have attained to a distinguished place among our dramatists.

Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery (1621–1679), the father of English heroic plays.

One other name may be more conveniently mentioned before than after that of the foremost literary genius of the Restoration age. To Roger Boyle, EARL OF ORRERY[3] (1621–1679), belongs the doubtful fame of having been the first to 'revive' (not, as Dryden insisted[4], to introduce) the writing of plays in rhymed verse for the English stage, and of having thus become the father of the English 'heroic' drama. His first play appears to have been the tragedy of *The Black Prince;* for though this was not acted till 1667[5], and had therefore been preceded on the stage by other works of the same author, he speaks of it in a letter to a friend as 'wrote in a new way,' 'in the French Manner, because I heard the King declare himself more in favour of their Way of Writing than ours. My poor

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 138. Wilson leaves the question open whether the original author was Macchiavelli or Straparola.

[2] See Dedication to *Andronicus Comnenius*.

[3] *The Dramatic Works of Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery.* 2 vols. 1739.

[4] See the Dedication (to Orrery) of *The Rival Ladies* (1664).

[5] See Pepys' *Diary*, October 19th, 1667: 'the first time it was acted.'

Attempt,' he continues, 'cannot please his Majesty, but my Example may incite others who can.' It did, as will be seen, so incite Dryden.

Character of his plays.

Of Lord Orrery's own efforts it will suffice to speak with great brevity. Sir Walter Scott says of him that 'he deserved Dryden's panegyric in every respect except as a poet;' and little need be added to the observation. The loyalty for which he was conspicuous shows itself in his plays by repeated references to the great danger of managing affairs by a council instead of by the will of one man; but his political sentiments are not otherwise displayed after a very demonstrative fashion. It may be noted, as equally significant of his personal character and of the literary style which he affected, that he more than once in his plays designates unheroic conduct as 'low'—probably the worst term of abuse in the gallant and romantic nobleman's vocabulary [1].

His versification.

As for these plays themselves, they possess little interest for us except with reference to their form, which is throughout that of heroic couplets. The versification, which in *The Black Prince* is exceedingly bald, improves in some of his later plays. Already in *Mustapha the Son of Solyman the Magnificent* (acted 1665) its general frigidity occasionally catches a spark of fire. Altogether, Lord Orrery shows himself capable of using his metre with considerable effect in dialogue, but on the other hand he is frequently guilty of prosaic turns. The sentiment of these dramas is even less varying than their form. Everything in the world of this writer's dramatic imagination turns on the sentiment of love. In *The Black Prince* the heroine Plantagenet (who here appears as the widow of the Earl of Kent) is provided with not less than four lovers—the Kings of England and of France, the Black Prince, and Lord Delawar. Not one of them, any more than the lady of their

The Black Prince (acted 1667).

[1] *e.g.* in *Henry V:*

'He who resigns his Love, though for a King,
Does, as he is a Lover, a low thing.'

Orrery besides his plays wrote a romance, *Parthenissa*, published 1664, and described by Dunlop, *History of Fiction*, p. 408, as 'much in the style of the French romance of the school of Calprenède and Scudéry.'

Tryphon (1668).

The History of Henry V (1664

Mustapha (1665).

affections, contrives to arouse our sympathy. The tragedy of *Tryphon* (acted 1668) is even less interesting, inasmuch as one cannot deceive oneself even momentarily as to the characters being more than lay-figures. *The History of Henry the Fifth* (acted 1664) excites a faint curiosity to observe to what extent Heroic Tragedy in its infancy will fail when offering to compete with Shakspere. Lord Orrery at all events deserves credit for a persistent attempt to remain original[1]; but the plot of his drama (which turns on the generous resignation by Owen Tudor of his passion for Princess Catharine in the interest of his sovereign, who has sent him to woo her in his name—a motive repeatedly worked by the drama[2]) needed bolder treatment than it has received at his hands. In *Mustapha* the author indubitably reached the highest point to which it was given to him to attain. Pure in sentiment and chaste in expression as in all his plays, Lord Orrery here shows that while he had caught something of the French dignity of style, he was not incapable of drawing a character[3] with some real spirit. The not quite faultless plot[4] (taken from a romance by Georges de Scudéry[5]) is of course a love-intrigue pure and simple; and (though Solyman the Magnificent is not altogether free from rant) it is needless to say that all the Turks engaged in it talk love as gently as any sucking-doves. A more typical example of conventionalism carried to an unbearable excess it would in this respect be difficult to find. *Herod*

[1] The only scene in which he seems to have had Shakspere in his mind is iv. 1, where the French and English lords debate the Salic Law; and here it must be allowed that Lord Orrery displays some dialectic skill. Princess Catharine's argument on behalf of Reason v. Love would do honour to any Court, but her conduct to Tudor is hardly more pleasing than her method of expressing it, already quoted.

[2] Cf. vol. i. p. 218.

[3] *viz.* that of Roxolana; see her first scene (where she protects the Hungarian infant-King) and the last act.

[4] The two sons of Solyma, Mustapha and Zangar, are a pair of noble kinsmen ready for any degree of self-sacrifice; the fault of the plot lies in the circumstance that there is no sufficient reason to induce us to pardon Roxolana for plotting her stepson's ruin, in favour of her own offspring.

[5] Cf. *ante*, p. 469, note 1. The subject has been treated by several later French dramatists. See La Harpe, *Cours de Littérature*, xvi. 136, and xxi. 1 *seqq.*

the Great (printed 1694), a tragedy on a subject which has attracted the attention of more than one dramatist[1], is perhaps the most striking of its author's plays, so far at least as variety of action is concerned; there are ghosts in it enough and to spare, and crime sufficient for Webster himself. Finally, the tragedy of *Altemira* (printed 1702), left unpublished at Lord Orrery's death, is altogether inferior to the two plays last mentioned. The author has here essayed a comic character in Filladen; but the scene in which he and the other lords review the ladies of the Court is as devoid of wit as the lyrics interspersed are of any charm[2].

Herod the Great (pr. 1694).

Altemira (pr. 1702).

Besides this tragedy, Lord Orrery left behind him, likewise unfinished, an uninteresting comedy, *Guzman* (printed 1693), the plot and style of which—it contains a mock astrologer and a foolish cowardly coxcomb given to ridiculous pedantical oaths—point to some Spanish source.

Guzman (pr. 1693).

Whether our dramatic literature would in the main continue in the paths marked out by its preceding history, or become a follower of foreign developements, or pursue a middle course and seek to find in a combination of national and foreign elements the conditions of a new

[1] A *Herod and Mariamne*, apparently written by Pordage, was brought on the stage by Settle in 1674. Fenton's *Mariamne*, by comparison with which Lord Orrery's tragedy appears to have suffered, was produced in 1723; Voltaire's in 1724. The German dramatist Hebbel—a genius of peculiar cast—has a tragedy, *Herodes und Mariamne*.—Calderon's *El Mayor Monstruo los Zelos* likewise treats the story of Mariamne and the jealous tetrarch (cf. Ticknor, ii. 383).

[2] In the Epilogue written for this play by Lord Orrery's grandson Charles Boyle, afterwards third Earl, occur three lines which so succinctly (though not very politely) sum up the canons of criticism applied to comedy by the audiences of his age that I cannot help quoting them:

> 'This Play, I'm horribly afraid, can't last;
> Allow it pretty, 'tis confounded chaste,
> And contradicts too much the present taste.'

The third Earl of Orrery was himself the author of a comedy, *As You Find It* (printed 1703, and republished with his grandfather's plays in the edition mentioned above), which is a rather lively play in the style of Colley Cibber's earlier works. A husband is reclaimed (rather late in the play) by a not very commendable stratagem on the part of his wife. The description of a 'Chocolate-House' in iii. 1 of this comedy would be worth extracting.

life of its own, was a question which the genius and the exertions of no single writer, however gifted and however fertile, could of itself determine. Yet the example set by such a writer would inevitably exercise the most important influence upon the ultimate settlement of the problem; and the future of our drama as a literary growth therefore depended, though by no means absolutely, yet in a great measure upon the attitude assumed towards the theory of dramatic composition, and upon the contributions made to dramatic literature by the greatest literary genius of the age—Dryden.

John Dryden (1631–1699).

JOHN DRYDEN (1631–1699) first came before the public as a dramatic writer early in the year 1663. He was at that time, though already known and recognised as an author of mark (as is shown by his election as a member of the Royal Society in 1662), in straitened though not in miserable circumstances, and had apparently resolved to trust to his literary exertions for the advancement of his fortunes in life. Thus it was inevitable that he should become a writer for the stage; and it was in the course of the year 1662 that he wrote his first play[1].

His The Wild Gallant (1663).

The Wild Gallant (acted February 1663) proved a failure; it was written, as the author confesses, 'while he was yet unfledged and wanted knowledge,' and from the Second Epilogue (written for the revival of the comedy) in 1669 he would seem to have been half ashamed of 'this motley garniture of fool and farce.' According to the prevailing fashion, he 'endangered' himself, to use his own expression, with 'a Spanish plot'—which is in parts utterly extravagant, while the coarseness of the execution is extreme.

[1] For Dryden's dramas the reader is referred to Sir Walter Scott's edition of Dryden's *Works*, 18 vols. The Life prefixed to this edition was based on the labours of Malone; the generous and sympathetic tone of criticism is characteristic of Sir Walter Scott. *The Retrospective Review*, vol. i. part i, contains an essay on *Dryden's Dramatic Works*, with numerous extracts. The late Mr. Christie, in the Introductory Memoir to the Globe Edition of Dryden's *Poetical Works* (where Dryden's *Prologues and Epilogues* will be found collected), has criticised most of the plays with his usual keenness; but with all respect for the memory of a high-minded and accomplished man, I find much in what he has here and in his *Life of Shaftesbury* said of Dryden to which I must continue to demur.

The most humorous passage of the play is moreover stolen from Ben Jonson[1]. For the plot of his next play, *The Rival Ladies* (acted 1664), he again went to a Spanish source; it is a complicated love-intrigue, the two rivals being both disguised as pages in the service of the man they love, who in his turn entertains an unrequited passion for a third lady. The treatment of the story cannot be praised for its refinement[2].

What is most noteworthy in this 'tragi-comedy' is the tentative introduction in some of its scenes of rhyme. Dryden indeed as yet only rarely displays the powerful touch of which in non-dramatic works he had already given evidence; but he was already prepared to defend in theory what he was only beginning to attempt in practice. In the Dedication to Lord Orrery (printed with the play in 1664) he compliments the dramatic author whose example he declares to be of more weight than his reasons, and defends the use of rhyme chiefly because it 'bounds and circumscribes' and 'most regulates the fancy[3].'

Dryden and Sir R. Howard's The Indian Queen (1664).

In his third play—or rather in the play in the composition of which he assisted his friend Sir Robert Howard (to what extent must remain undecided till a 'verse-test' has been discovered for the Restoration dramatists)—the tragedy of *The Indian Queen* (acted 1664), Dryden had an opportunity of carrying out the principle advocated

[1] *viz.* the incident of Trice's solitary duet with two dice-boxes (i. 3); cf. Carlo and his cups in *Every Man Out of his Humour* (v. 4).—Bibber the Tailor (of 'fiery facias') is imitated in *The Rehearsal.*

[2] The two pages fight a duel for Gonsalvo (one having proposed that they should 'scratch for him' instead), and a mutual discovery results. In the end, after some hairbreadth 'scapes, all ends well, one of the rivals receiving the gift of Gonsalvo's heart ('not worn out but polished by the wearing' of his previous passion), the other being otherwise provided for.

[3] He will hardly allow the term 'blank verse,' thinking the French 'prose mesuré' more appropriate. It is worth observing that he says he will not name the French as examples, because little of theirs is admitted by Englishmen. (The imitation of the French drama was only beginning.) What he says of the advantages of rhyme over blank-verse in 'regulating the fancy' has at all events a very forcible application to the case of young writers; I confess to being old-fashioned enough to regret that blank-verse is permitted to the writers of University prize poems. One of the main results such exercises can help to secure is thus likely to be sacrificed.

in the above Dedication. The whole of this tragedy except the charm and songs in iii. 2 and v. 1 (which are in shorter rhymed metres) is written in heroic couplets. The versification, as might be expected from the joint authorship, is unequal; it seems to improve in the latter half of the play, and there are a few passages (such as one towards the close of act ii and Zempoalla's cynical definition of virtue and honour in iii. 1) of which it may be safely asserted that Howard could never have written them. As for the play itself, though the Epilogue takes credit for its choice of the New World as a novel scene, it remarks with self-condemnatory justice that

> 'Shows may be found that never yet were seen;
> 'Tis hard to find such wit as ne'er has been'—

for the action is thoroughly commonplace, and the characters are just as much and as little Peruvians and Mexicans as the personages in Fletcher's *Princess* are islanders of the East Indian Archipelago.

Dryden's The Indian Emperor (1665).

The success of *The Indian Queen* encouraged Dryden to produce (in 1665) a 'sequel' under the title of *The Indian Emperor, or The Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards*, which was received with equal, or even greater, favour and may be said to have permanently established its author's reputation as a dramatist. The plot of this tragedy is 'original;' it is a tissue of conflicting loves contrived after a fashion which became typical for the heroic plays of the age[1]. The chief attraction of the play doubtless consisted neither in the cleverness and spirit of particular passages in the dialogue, nor even in the effectiveness or strong sensationalism of particular situations[2], but in the uniformly pleasing flow of the versification, and in the supernatural business introduced. For us however the main interest of this production lies in the fact that the form of versification

[1] Cortez falls in love with Montezuma's daughter Cydaria; Montezuma is in love with Almeria; Almeria with Cortez, &c. &c.

[2] For examples, see the ingenious introduction of the question of the Papal Supremacy (i. 2), the theological disputation between Montezuma and the Christian Priest, before the former and his High Priest are racked on the stage (v. 2), the magnanimity of Cortez to his would-be assassin and their duel by moonlight (iii. 2 and 3).

which Dryden desired to establish in the English serious drama was here for the first time fairly on its trial; and that while not always proving adequate to the demands upon its new-fledged strength (see *e.g.* the important scene iv. 1), it upon the whole achieved a brilliant, though not a trustworthy or wholly legitimate, success.

His Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen (1667).

That Dryden still remained in doubt as to the possibility of permanently establishing the results of this brilliant experiment, is shown by the fact that his next play, the tragi-comedy of *Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen* (acted early in 1667, before the publication of the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*), exhibits a mixture of rhyme, blank-verse, and prose. This play, of which the serious plot is founded on a story in one of Mdlle. de Scudéry's romances, supposed to be based on history[1], is a very spirited production, and justifies the predilection which King Charles II displayed for it[2]. The serious portion, though not devoid of merit, has a weak point of which the author was well aware[3]; but the chief merit of the play lies in the comic passages between the unstable Celadon and his mistress Florimel—who marry one another with their eyes perfectly open,

[1] *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus.* The story (see Dryden's Preface) is there called 'the Queen of Corinth; in whose character, as it has been affirmed to me,' is represented 'that of the famous Christina, Queen of Sweden.' Scandal was very busy with the life and adventures of Gustavus Adolphus' daughter (who resigned her throne in 1654 and died—in the Catholic faith—in 1689). But though a more eccentric figure hardly occurs in history, she was probably, as the Swedish historian Geijer puts it, 'better than her reputation.' The circumstances under which she refused the hand of her kinsman Charles Gustavus the Count Palatine, but caused him to be appointed her successor, bear only a superficial resemblance to the conduct of the Queen in Dryden's play towards Lysimantes 'first Prince of the Blood;' if Philocles or his original in the romance is meant for anybody, it must be Count Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie, the earliest of Queen Christina's favourites, whom she actually married to Charles Gustavus' sister, as in the play Philocles is married to Candiope the sister of Lysimantes. De la Gardie was an even more contemptible character than Philocles.

[2] 'It has been owned in so particular a manner by his majesty, that he has graced it with the title of his play.' (*Preface.*)

[3] *viz.* the character of Philocles, which Dryden accordingly seeks to defend in the Prologue; but the fault does not consist, as Dryden puts it, in Philocles not being a perfect character, but in his being an ignoble one. The character of the Queen seems to me well-sustained and effective.

though the lady was first courted as a 'miss in a mask[1].' If a licence in both situation and sentiment which I have no wish to defend be condoned, the fresh gaiety of these figures will be thoroughly enjoyed; and Florimel (to whose mirthful ways full justice was no doubt done by Nell Gwynn) is a lively and delightful type evidently drawn from real life[2].

Sir Martin Mar-All (1667).

In the same year 1667 were probably acted two plays, of neither of which the credit—such as it is—belongs wholly to Dryden. The comedy of *Sir Martin Mar-All, or The Feigned Innocence* (printed 1668) was an adaptation by Dryden for the English stage of the Duke of Newcastle's translation of Molière's earliest comedy *L'Étourdi* (first acted 1653), and was not published by Dryden with his own name till 1697. Scott, who notes that Quinault's *L'Amour Indiscret* was likewise put under contribution, has shown in what respects Dryden's comedy varies from Molière's, but has I think overstated the case in saying that, with the necessary allowances, the French play is followed in the English 'with considerable exactness.' The merits however of the latter (which was very successful) lie in the humour, novel so far as I know to the English drama, of the chief character[3], and in the ease of the dialogue; the episode foisted into Molière's plot by Dryden is a gratuitous addition of grossness. *Sir Martin Mar-All* is, unlike its French original, in prose. The other and better-known adaptation, probably produced in this year (though not printed till 1670), is mainly in blank-verse and prose, but rhymed passages are interspersed. This is Dryden's execution of D'Avenant's design upon Shakspere under the title of *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island*[4]. I

The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island (1667).

[1] This is, I think I have seen it stated, the first known instance of the use of the disagreeable abbreviation 'Miss.'

[2] An unimportant situation in this play is borrowed from Shirley's *Love in a Maze* (see Dyce's Introduction to that play in Shirley's *Works*, ii. 270).

[3] Dryden's translation of the title is excellent. An *étourdi* is a blunderer who never does the right thing at the right moment, and always does the wrong thing instead.

[4] Cf. *ante*, p. 486, and vol. i. p. 288, note 1. Shadwell, in 1673, went a step further than D'Avenant and Dryden had gone, and turned *The Tempest* into an opera.

need dwell no further on this deplorable effort except to observe that already the Prologue is a monster of the *desinit in piscem* species; for it begins with some justly famous lines in honour of Shakspere, and ends with ribaldry. But as I am speaking of adaptations, I may at once mention a third, produced by Dryden not long afterwards. The prose comedy of *An Evening's Love, or The Mock Astrologer* (acted and printed 1668) is acknowledged by Dryden to be taken in part from the younger Corneille's *Le Feint Astrologue*, a version of *El Astrologo Fingido* (by Calderon). But he seems to claim credit for the addition of the two 'chief persons' in the play, Wildblood and Jacinta, omitting to mention what Scott has pointed out, that most of the quarrelling scene between the pair is copied (not however exactly 'literally') from *Le Dépit Amoureux* of Molière[1]. The comedy is very vivacious, and Dryden moves quite at his ease in the dialogue; but I can by no means agree with Sir Walter Scott in preferring Jacinta and Wildblood to Florimel and Celadon.

An Evening's Love, or The Mock Astrologer (1668).

About this time, or rather earlier (1667), Dryden had become virtually a partner in the King's Company, for which he was regularly retained as a writer[2]. Thus the authority of a recognised position, as well as that of a proved and acknowledged power to please, commended the doctrines on the theory and practice of dramatic composition which he about this time put forth. Considerable interest attaches to the first of those noteworthy critical essays, none of which, notwithstanding the variations in their views and the unsoundness of at least some of their

Dryden publishes his Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1667 or 1668.)

[1] iv. 3 in both plays. (Cf. *ante*, p. 478, note 1.) Dryden could have afforded to be candid. For in the Epilogue he boldly boasts of himself that as to the French

'He did not steal their plots, but made them prize;'

and in the Preface he defends himself not infelicitously against the charge of stealing part of his plays; declaring that he will continue to do so, so long as he makes what he appropriates his own, by 'heightening it for our theatre (which is incomparably more curious in all the ornaments of dramatic poesy than the French or Spanish).'

[2] See Christie's *Memoir*, Globe Edition, p. xxix. Dryden bound himself to produce three plays a year, but actually only produced ten in as many years (end of 1667 to beginning of 1678).

positions, the student of dramatic literature will even at this day do well to neglect. It is possible[1] that the publication (in 1664) of Richard Flecknoe's *A Short Discourse of the English Stage* first suggested to Dryden the thought of such an essay as that which, written in 1666, he gave to the world early in 1668, or at the close of the preceding year[2]. The *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, most agreeably written in the form of a dialogue between four friends[3], may be briefly described as a defence of the position that English dramatists, while maintaining the superior freedom of the modern as compared with the ancient, and of the English as compared with the French drama, would with advantage adopt the innovation of rhyme. The earlier parts of the argument are both skilfully and forcibly sustained, and many of the criticisms are not only remarkably keen but just, but what possesses most interest for us are the conclusions at which Dryden (in the person of Neander) arrives that the English drama has many plays 'as regular as' any of the French, 'and which, besides, have more variety of plot and characters;' 'and, secondly, that in most of the irregular plays of Shakespeare or Fletcher (for Ben Jonson's are for the most part regular) there is a more masculine fancy, and greater spirit in the writing, than there is in any of the French.' Clearly, then, it was not the French drama either in comedy or in tragedy, but the national drama to which Dryden wished future developements of our dramatic literature to attach themselves. At the same

Its preference of the English to the French drama.

[1] This is the supposition of Geneste, x. 252. Flecknoe's discourse, which was printed with his pastoral tragi-comedy of *Love's Kingdom* (described *ib.* p. 248), will be found in Mr. Hazlitt's *The English Drama and Stage*. It certainly contains some good things. (Why Dryden associated Flecknoe with Shadwell in his immortal satire remains unknown, unless it was to annoy the 'True Blue Protestant Poet' by declaring him the successor of an Irish Catholic priest—for such Flecknoe seems to have been.)

[2] He republished it in a revised form in 1684, with a Dedication to Lord Buckhurst (afterwards Earl of Dorset), where he says that he had laid the practice of verse aside, because he finds it 'troublesome and slow,' but is 'in no way altered from his opinion of it, at least with any reasons which have opposed it.'

[3] Neander and Lisideius are anagrammatical names for Dryden and Sidley (Sir Charles Sedley), Crites is Sir Robert Howard, Eugenius (according to Prior) Buckhurst (Dorset). The *Essay* will be found in vol. xv of Scott's edition.

time he was anxious to maintain the innovation of rhymed verse, to a consideration of which the latter part of the dialogue is devoted. In opposition to the opinion of Crites (Howard[1]), Neander maintains that in serious plays (for he excludes comedy) rhyme is 'more effectual' than blank-verse. In the hands of a good poet, rhyme, if duly placed, is not unnatural; and if it can be made natural in itself, there is no reason why it should become unnatural in a play. If there are thoughts which are little and mean in rhyme, there are necessarily likewise such in blank-verse. And the judgment of a poet is assisted rather than impeded by a form which puts bounds to an overflowing fancy.

Its plea for rhyme.

To this *Essay* Sir Robert Howard, who had been throughout treated with the greatest courtesy by his brother-in-law[2], replied in a Preface to a play (*The Duke of Lerma*) published by him in 1668. He here comments on Dryden's defence of rhyme, and on the futility of the attempt made in the *Essay* to lay down general rules for plays as to Time and Place. The tone of this reply is good-humoured[3], and the author pays a very modestly-conceived compliment to the talents of his antagonist. Dryden answered in *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, prefixed to the second edition of *The Indian Emperor* (1668), of which the tone is more vivacious and bantering, and of which one very amusing passage can hardly have failed to annoy

Sir Robert Howard's reply.

Dryden's A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668).

[1] This had been put forth by Howard in the Preface to *Four New Plays* (1665), (reprinted in the third edition of Howard's *Dramatic Works*, 1722). The argument here is that what is proper in a poem, 'being a premeditated Form of Thoughts upon design'd Occasions,' is not necessarily proper in a drama, 'which is presented as the present effect of Accidents.' He adds, with some point, that an unnatural effect is produced 'when a Piece of Verse is made up by one that knew not what the other meant to say, and the former Verse answered as perfectly in Sound as the last is supplied in Measure; so that the Smartness of a Reply, which has its Beauty by coming from sudden Thoughts, seems lost by that which rather looks like a Design of two, than the Answer of one.' (It is odd, by the bye, that in *The Duke of Lerma*, which is not generally in rhyme, Howard should employ it in at least two passages where the situation demands the expression of strong natural emotion.)

[2] Dryden had married Sir Robert Howard's sister in 1664.

[3] It is I think unfairly represented by Scott, i. 97; and by Mr. Christie, p. xxvii. That a personal quarrel was the result of this controversy seems to be a conclusion from the lampoons of Dryden's enemies, Shadwell in particular. See Christie, and Morley, *First Sketch*, p. 655.

his antagonist. The questions at issue are however not materially advanced; Dryden maintains his view that 'Prose though the rightful prince, yet is by common consent deposed, as too weak for the government of serious plays;' that 'Blank Verse is blemished with the weakness of his predecessor;' and that Rhyme, though he 'has somewhat of the usurper in him,' 'is brave, and generous, and his dominion pleasing.' As for the unities of time and place, he contents himself with demanding so much self-restraint as is reconcileable with a reasonable latitude.

And in this position the question for the present remained. Without wholly renouncing their freedom as to the management of time and place, Dryden and the contemporary writers of the serious drama endeavoured to approximate their practice to the spirit of laws the general advantages of which they acknowledged. As to rhyme, they continued to employ it so long as it pleased,—in other words, so long as Dryden himself chose to employ it. The progress of Dryden's general theories on the most desirable developement of the English serious drama will be further noted; as to his defence of rhyme, it may be unhesitatingly rejected. For English ears rhymed couplets had acquired a different sound from that which they possessed and possess for French[1], partly by the peculiar use to which the usage of our dramatists had (with variations indeed, but with a general steady tendency in this direction) agreed to restrict them, partly from their employment in species of poetry in which they were gradually coming to acquire a form adverse to the semblance of continuity. In the ears of English audiences, however a passing fashion might endeavour to conceal the fact, they must have constituted an impediment, instead of an aid, to dramatic illusion. The use of rhyme was therefore at variance with that definition of a play which Lisideius, with the applause of his friends, gives in the *Essay*, and which demands that it should be 'a just and lively image of human nature.'

Dryden's views as to rhyme in the English drama inadmissible.

It must be added, that even granting the possibility of

[1] See on this head the excellent remarks of M. Taine, *Hist. de la Litt. Anglaise*, vol. iii. p. 187; and cf. *ante*, p. 475.

employing rhymed verse as a suitable metre for serious English plays, a task was thereby imposed upon the dramatists before which even the elastic genius of a Dryden was likely in the end to succumb. He afterwards confessed, that though he adhered to his theories on the subject, he found the continuation of the effort 'too troublesome,' and that he had grown weary of 'his long-lov'd mistress.' But for the present he, according to his wont, revelled in the prodigal power of his genius. In his next play, the tragedy of *Tyrannic Love, or The Royal Martyr* (printed 1670; acted probably 1669 or end of 1668), which is entirely in rhymed verse, there are passages which suggest the thought that *si sic omnia dixisset* he might have succeeded in vindicating the new form in the eyes of posterity itself[1]. Yet even from this play it would not be difficult to quote other passages in which the form is either inadequate or helps to cause a tone more rhetorical than the nature of the theme brings with it. The expedient of broken lines, moreover, which Dryden extolled so highly as a useful relief, is not in general suited to rhymed verse—indeed, the way in which it is employed by some contemporary dramatists is at times almost ludicrous[2]; and one or two Alexandrines are unwelcome intruders.

Dryden's Tyrannic Love, or The Royal Martyr (1668 or 1669).

This play, which freely (and in part, as Dryden acknowledges, incorrectly) treats a historical subject—the persecutions of the Christians by Maximin—and the legend of the martyrdom of St. Catharine, is upon the whole extremely spirited[3]. The character of Maximin is sustained with

[1] See *e.g.* Maximin's opening lines of iii. 1; his speech ('I'll find that power o'er wills') iv. 1; and his speech v. 1 ('What had the Gods to do with me or mine'), which last I cannot follow Scott in condemning.

[2] I am not aware, however, that any of them has in this respect done worse than Dryden himself in a passage of *The Conquest of Granada* (Part II, iv. 3), where Almanzor says to his Mother's Ghost:

> 'Well mayst thou make thy boast whoe'er thou art!
> Thou art the first e'er made Almanzor start.
> My legs
> Shall bear me to thee in their own despite,' &c.

But it must be conceded that in other passages of this play, in which the broken lines are very frequent, they have a surprising rhythmical effectiveness.

[3] The comparison with Massinger's *Virgin Martyr* (*ante*, p. 269) naturally

genuine vigour; St. Catharine, on the other hand, is hardly to be called a dramatic personage[1]. As to the miracle on the stage, comment is superfluous. An audience which could enjoy both it and the Epilogue to this tragedy must indeed have been composed of strange materials[2].

Almanzor and Almahide, or The Conquest of Granada (1669 or 1670).

Tyrannic Love was succeeded (late in 1669 or early in 1670) by a yet more famous tragedy, in two Parts[3]. Independently of the various theatrical and literary consequences of its production, *Almanzor and Almahide, or The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards* has been generally, and justly, regarded as the most prominent type of the 'heroic plays' of this age. Its in some degree historical plot was mainly taken from Mdlle. de Scudéry's romance of *Almahide;* and of the chief character, Almanzor, Dryden confesses, in his lofty way, that he had derived 'the first image from the Achilles of Homer, the next from Tasso's Rinaldo (who was a copy of the former), and the third from the Artaban of Monsieur Calpranede, who has imitated both. He is,' the dramatist complacently adds, 'on a grand scale (not like the heroes of French romance[4]).' Without venturing to decide the question as to whether 'the most probable of the actions' of the hero 'are not impossible,' I may observe that the spirit of the dialogue from Part I, act i. sc. i onwards is incontestably astonishing.

suggests itself; but Dryden's tragedy, though similar in some points of the action as well as in the general character of the argument, is written independently of Massinger's. In the latter the heroine is attended by one angelic guide—in Dryden's, hosts of good and of evil spirits contend over her couch. This not very effective interlude (which was duly burlesqued in *The Rehearsal*, act v) was probably intended to gratify the tastes of the Duchess of Monmouth, to whose husband the play is dedicated.—Dryden expressly denies having taken anything of importance out of two French plays on the subject.

[1] Her argument with the priest (ii. 1) ends rather abruptly with his conversion; to give him his due, he had not argued badly up to her final speech.

[2] The Epilogue was spoken by Nell Gwynn, who had acted Valeria. It begins by her apostrophising the person who was to 'carry her off dead' in terms of startling downrightness, and then announcing herself to her friends in front as 'the ghost of poor departed Nelly.'

[3] This writing of plays in parts, though no novelty on the stage, is ridiculed in *The Rehearsal*. 'Whereas,' says Bayes, iv. 1, 'every one makes five Acts to one Play, what do I but make five Plays to one Plot?'

[4] *Essay on Heroic Plays.*

If a considerable amount of rant expresses the 'over-boiling[1]' courage of Almanzor, and if the conception of his pride and valour are alike hyper-Achillean—so that altogether he was well qualified for the caricature of Drawcansir in *The Rehearsal*[2]—yet many of the turns of expression are marvellously vigorous, and the way in which the character is sustained through ten acts is really marvellous. The extravagance of the conception is however such as to make the entire character at times almost grotesque, while the bombast of particular passages renders them ludicrous *when examined.* Of the other characters the best is Almahide—a picture of real female dignity, against which love contends in vain. The ambitious Lyndaxara, on the other hand, is drawn without power. The rest of the characters are in themselves uninteresting; but the entire play is written with such spirit that it cannot fall flat, even in a mere reading of it, so long as the attention can keep up the necessary strain.

Something of Almanzor's arrogance of spirit must have communicated itself to the poet when in the Epilogue to this play he ventured to assert that he and his fellows had left the old poets—even Jonson—behind, because the whole age had made an advance upon theirs:

> 'Our ladies and our men now speak more wit
> In conversation, than those poets writ.'

The Defence of the Epilogue, &c. (1672).

This arrogance having justly given offence, and Rochester, who in a fit of spleen at the success of *The Conquest of Granada* was about to deprive Dryden of the sunshine of his favour, having assailed him with a coarse denial of the major of his proposition[3], the poet, put on his mettle, published with his play (in 1672) a *Defence of*

[1] 'I have formed a hero, I confess, not absolutely perfect, but of an excessive and over-boiling courage; but Homer and Tasso are my predecessors.' *Dedication.*

[2] 'Who is that Drawcansir?

'*Bayes.* Why, Sir, a fierce Hero that fights his Mistriss, snubs up Kings, baffles Armies, and does what he will, without regard to good manners, justice, or numbers.' *The Rehearsal* (iv. 1).

[3] Asking him, in fact, whether he was so sure of his being a wit and a poet himself? The lines are quoted by Scott, iv. 229.

the Epilogue, or an Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age. In this short Essay he sought to maintain the assertion that language had become correcter since the days of Shakspere, Fletcher and Jonson, and wit both correcter and more courtly. This result he boldly ascribes to the Court, and particularly to the King, who it is to be hoped did not receive the compliment with one of those favourite expletives by which he has enriched our tongue[1].

The Duke of Buckingham and others produce the burlesque of The Rehearsal (1671).

But before Dryden published his master-piece in the 'heroic' drama, accompanied both by this Essay and another of greater importance in which he endeavoured to defend the entire species of which he had furnished so brilliant an example, those shafts which success has most to fear —the shafts of ridicule — had clattered down upon his gorgeous armour and found more than one hole in it. It must be stated at once that the effect of *The Rehearsal* has been much exaggerated[2]; for it left 'heroic plays' very much where it found them; and they continued to be produced and applauded so long as Dryden chose to expend the efforts of his genius upon them[3]. Indeed, it is questionable whether this lively *jeu-d'esprit* can properly be said to have been directed essentially against 'rhymed heroic plays;' it would have been more effective as a literary effort, and would have better deserved the credit which it has enjoyed, if it had not mixed up so many kinds of plays as the subjects of its ridicule, and

[1] The argument of this Essay is conducted chiefly by means of petty criticisms of passages in the old writers. We, on the other hand, Dryden maintains, have refined the language by adding new words and phrases (but with his usual sound sense, he blames those who corrupt English by mixing it too much with French), and by applying words to new significations. We have better opportunities, for 'greatness' is now easier of access than it then was; and 'as the excellency of' the King's 'nature forgave the rebellion, so the excellency of his manners reformed the barbarisms of his subjects.' In all this there is just enough truth to prove that there are two sides to every question.

[2] So *e.g.* by Hettner, in his generally admirable chapter on Dryden in his *Litteraturgeschichte des 18 Jahrhunderts*, i. 90, where, after speaking of *The Rehearsal*, he says that 'rhymed heroic tragedy was now lost for ever,' though noting that it was still occasionally performed.

[3] This has been pointed out by Mr. R. Bell.

if it had concentrated its attack upon the most powerful, as he was the most glaring, offender. But the authors of this burlesque, among whom besides the principal author, George Villiers DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM, are said to have been Butler (the author of *Hudibras*), Sprat, Martin, Clifford (Master of the Charterhouse) and others, can have had no intention beyond that of ridiculing what they thought either deserving of or likely to excite laughter; and were so far from intending a crushing attack upon Dryden as a dramatist, that it seems as if first Sir William D'Avenant, and then Sir Robert Howard (under the name of Bilboa), had been chosen as the hero of the burlesque. D'Avenant however escaped the honour by dying (in 1668); and Dryden's appointment to the poet-laureateship (in 1669), together with the success of his *Conquest of Granada*, clearly entitled him to the preference over his brother-in-law. Thus this elaborate trifle, which is said to have been begun in 1663 and to have been ready for representation in 1665 (when the Plague intervened), was in a modified form at last produced on December 7, 1671. The success of *The Rehearsal* is too well known to need description; it went through five editions in Buckingham's life-time, and is stated to have gone through sixteen more since; it was the parent of a long if not illustrious line of descendants, of which Sheridan's *Critic* has alone rivalled it in popularity; it supplied an eminent writer with the title of a celebrated satire[1], and many small writers with an infinity of small jokes, and it affixed to Dryden, who was caricatured in its hero Bayes, a nickname which clung to him through life.

Nature and objects of its satire.

More it did not do; and I therefore leave the reader to make or renew acquaintance with its wit, some of which has naturally grown as musty as the plays it holds up to ridicule by means of quotations and parodies of language or situations. Of these plays most would have died a

[1] Marvell's *The Rehearsal Transprosed*.—Fielding's excellent *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1731) shows how *The Rehearsal* had failed to exhaust the capabilities of its subject. Dryden's plays themselves furnish Fielding with many opportunities for ridicule.

natural death without this friendly assistance. The ridicule against 'Bayes'—besides personalities which have long lost such savour as they ever possessed—directs itself against his supposed mechanical manufacture of plots, plays, and passages with the help of a book of 'Drama Commonplaces' (i. 1). The idea is droll, but pointless as applied to Dryden. He is also ridiculed for his Prologues, and—in what strikes me as the wittiest passage in the whole—for his deficiency in the matter of plots[1]. Of his plays *The Wild Gallant* with its deservedly satirised repartees, *Tyrannic Love*, *The Conquest of Granada* with Drawcansir's bombast[2], and others are impartially ridiculed. Among better-known authors besides Dryden, Sir William D'Avenant, Fanshawe, Quarles, Stapylton[3], and Mrs. Aphra Behn supply materials; the ridicule of the Opera and Ballet is most legitimate; what particular play, if any, suggested the famous Two Kings of Brentford has not so far as I know been discovered. The fun of this farrago of prose, blank-verse, song and dance—which fun need not for a moment be denied—is not of a nature to require further illustration[4].

Dryden, who was too wise to retort upon such an

[1] The passage occurs in the Epilogue:

'The Play is at an end, but where's the Plot?
That circumstance our Poet Bayes forgot;
And we can boast, though 'tis a plotting Age,
No place is freer from it than the Stage.'

[2] 'He that dares drink, and for that drink dares die,
And, knowing this, dares yet drink on, am I.' (iv. 1.)

[3] Of Sir Robert Stapylton (d. 1669), whose comedy of *The Slighted Maid* (pr. 1663) figures in *The Rehearsal*, I am only acquainted with one play, *The Tragedie of Hero and Leander* (1668). Written mainly in rhyme, this tragedy is quite uninteresting—the love-story being (perhaps with the view of refining on the puppet-plays on the subject referred to in the Prologue; cf. *Bartholomew Fair*, v. 3) all but lost in the progress of the rest of the plot. The diction only here or there approaches either poetry or rant; and the main character of the play is that of inoffensive mediocrity.

[4] The necessary details and explanations, so far as they are obtainable, will be found in the Introduction and illustrations to Mr. Arber's Reprint of *The Rehearsal* (*English Reprints*, 1869), from which I have borrowed some statements. The *Key to the Rehearsal* in vol. ii of *The Miscellaneous Works of Buckingham* ('collected and prepar'd for the Press by the Late Ingenious Mr. Thomas Brown') pretends to be by the Duke, but is neither genuine nor (as even a cursory examination will show) complete.

attack[1], was certainly not crushed by it either in spirit or in activity. In the following year he published with his *Conquest of Granada* an Essay *Of Heroic Plays*, which though slight and probably not the fruit of much thought, at all events proves that he had not as yet relinquished the ambition of further successes in the same direction. He no longer admits the admissibility of heroic verse into serious plays to be a question admitting of dispute. Repeating his former arguments in favour of rhyme, he traces the history of heroic plays on the English stage to Sir William D'Avenant's operas, which lacked certain elements since supplied. 'An heroic play,' he continues, 'ought to be an imitation, in little, of an heroic poem, and consequently, love and valour ought to be the subject of it.' He claims for 'an heroic poet' exemption from the necessity of a bare representation of 'what is true or exceeding probable;' and thus seeks to justify the introduction of supernatural agency. He defends, as no novelty on the stage and as necessary to raise the imagination of the audience, the noise and paraphernalia of war. And defending his typical character of Almanzor, he declares that he will 'never subject his characters to the French standard, where love and honour are to be weighed by drams and scruples.'

Dryden's Essay of Heroic Plays (1672).

In the first instance, however, having vindicated his position by taking up this defiant attitude, Dryden now turned to a species of dramatic writing for which, as he more than once declared, he felt less qualified by nature, but which, under the circumstances of his position, lent itself more easily to the requisite rapidity of production. Of the two comedies *The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery* (acted 1672) and *Marriage à-la-Mode* (acted 1673), the

His The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery (1672).

[1] He contemptuously retorts upon an assailant who had spoken of him under 'the noble name of Bayes' with which he was now constantly assailed, in his *Vindication of the Duke of Guise* (Scott, vii. 165); and similarly upon the author of *The Rehearsal* himself in the *Dedication* to Juvenal (quoted *ib.*) In the Epilogue to *All for Love* he seems to disclaim identification with Mr. Bayes, and it is amusing to find him turning the burlesque simile of the 'Two Kings of Brentford' against the two heroes of Corneille's *Œdipe*. (See Preface to *Œdipus*.)

former appears to have been very well and the latter ill received; and in both cases the public I think judged rightly. *The Assignation*, though it is written with great ease and contains one rather humorous character (the bungling Benito[1]), is a worthless play, and approaches the style of Mrs. Aphra Behn[2]. *Marriage à-la-Mode*, on the other hand, is thoroughly amusing in its comic action, which though occasionally as Melantha would say *risquée* to a considerable degree, is yet (as the author with some pride points out in the Epilogue) kept within certain bounds. The character of Melantha herself, a fashionable lady and 'one of those who run mad in new French words[3],' is excellent; Congreve has hardly surpassed it; and we are already near to the height of the Restoration comedy of manners[4].

Marriage à-la-Mode (1673).

In 1673 Dryden also produced—with fatal rapidity—a tragedy which Scott justly describes as 'beneath criticism,' and which may be dismissed accordingly. *Amboyna, or The Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants* was (see Dedication) 'contrived or written in a month'—very possibly to order. It is an attempt to inflame popular feeling against the Dutch, war with whom had been declared in the previous year, by reviving the memory of an atrocity committed just fifty years before, and condoned by the feeble Government of James I[5]. The play might be described as one of the most ordinary 'sensational'

Amboyna (1673).

[1] 'All things,' he says (v. 2), 'go cross to men of sense: would I had been born with the brains of a shopkeeper, that I might have thriven without knowing why I did so.'

[2] In the Epilogue Dryden deprecates the supposition that he intended any scandal against nuns; but Hippolyte is hardly a specimen at the selection of which a devout Catholic could have rejoiced.

[3] '*Philotis* . . . You have so drained all the French plays and romances, that they are not able to supply you with words for your daily expense. *Melantha.* Drained? What a word's there! *Épuisée*, you sot you.' (iii. 1.)

[4] *Marriage à-la-Mode* is to be distinguished from *Ladies à-la-Mode*, a play by Dryden mentioned by Pepys under September 1668, but not preserved.

[5] The murder (on the pretence of a plot having been formed by them) of the English merchants at Amboyna (one of the Molucca islands) could not fail to create 'some little excitement; but this quickly died away,' and the deed, though deeply resented by King James, was in the end left unavenged. See Gardiner, *History of England under Buckingham and Charles I*, i. 77 *et post.*

kind, were it not that even here the 'heroic' sentiment finds occasion for venting itself, the whole crime being traced to a guilty love-passion. The 'patriotic' invective fills the reader with shame instead of sympathy[1], while the horrors perpetrated on, and all but on, the stage inspire as much disgust as compassion[2].

An odd spark of this half-artificial patriotic fire finds its way[3] into Dryden's next dramatic work—if it deserve that name. The 'opera' of *The State of Innocence and Fall of Man*, though never intended for representation, is a more extraordinary though a less deplorable aberration from good taste than *Amboyna*. This quasi-dramatic version of *Paradise Lost* was first published in 1674, shortly after Milton's death. It seems to have been intended partly as a tribute to the genius of a poet whose greatness Dryden in his Preface acknowledges in terms leaving nothing to be desired, and more especially as a proof that 'one of the greatest, most noble and most sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced' could be further beautified by an ornament (rhyme) of which Dryden was convinced that Milton would have himself made use, had he possessed either 'the ease of doing it, or the graces of it[4].' The result was a *tour de force* in which any one but Dryden would have failed even more egregiously[5]. The *Poetic*

The State of Innocence and Fall of Man (printed 1674).

The event is referred to by at least two pre-Restoration dramatists; *viz.* Fletcher, *The Fair Maid of the Inn*, iv. 2, and Shirley, *Honoria and Mammon*, i. 2.

[1] It is a well-known but instructive fact that the tone of the patriotic war-party of the day was to hold the Dutch up to ridicule as a nation of *shop-keepers*. See this play, ii. 1. The 'Let Caesar live, and Carthage be subdued' echoes the 'Delenda est Carthago' of Shaftesbury,—who was to live to seek a refuge among the people he had sought to ruin.—In *Amboyna*, by the bye, occurs the long-lived rollicking lyric,

> 'Who ever saw a noble sight
> That never viewed a brave sea-fight,' &c. (iii. 3.)

[2] Among these it will be sufficient to point to the torturing on the stage of the English—one of them being 'led with matches tied to his hands.' (v. 1.)

[3] In *The State of Innocence* (i. 1) Lucifer addresses the infernal powers as

> 'Most *high and mighty* lords, who better fell
> From heaven, to rise *states-general* of hell.'

[4] Milton is said to have replied to Dryden's communication of his intention: 'Aye, you may *tag* my verses if you will.'

[5] From Hayley's *Life of Milton* (cited by Klein, vol. vi. Part i. p. 19 *seqq.*) it would appear probable that Milton was acquainted with an Italian mystery

Licence, claimed for heroic poetry in the Preface, of 'speaking things in verse which are beyond the severity of prose' is put to a strange use when, on beholding a vision of Heaven full of Angels and blessed Spirits, Eve remarks (with a philosophy transcending Optimism itself):

'Ravished with joy, I can but half repent
The sin which heaven makes happy in the event.'

Aureng-Zebe (1676).

In the tragedy of *Aureng-Zebe* (acted and printed 1676) Dryden once more and for the last time produced a rhymed heroic play. In the Epistle Dedicatory he professes himself weary of low comedy, and desirous, if he 'must be condemned to rhyme,' of 'some ease in his change of punishment.' He wishes to be 'no more the Sisyphus of the stage'—in other words, he was at this time contemplating an epic poem. In the well-known Prologue to this play, he likewise expresses his weariness 'of his long-loved mistress, Rhyme,' and, in words for the sake of which he may well be pardoned the arrogance of his Epilogue to *The Conquest of Granada*, avows that

'Spite of all his pride, a secret shame
Invades his breast at Shakespeare's sacred name.'

Though I think this tragedy has been criticised with excessive severity, yet it must be allowed to be not only tamer than *The Conquest of Granada*[1], but in general inferior to it in power of diction. The historical theme (Aureng-Zebe, the Great Mogul, was a living prince) is treated with great freedom; but the absence of all supernatural machinery is noticeable.

All for Love, or The World Well Lost (1678).

When two years later (1678) Dryden, without having accomplished his epical design, once more returned to the drama, it was with a curious but characteristic mixture of generous admiration for the greatness of 'the divine Shakespeare,' and of self-consciousness, that he addressed

of the seventeenth century, Giovanni Battista Andreini's *Adamo*, and possibly derived from it the first idea of *Paradise Lost*, which he is known at one time to have contemplated treating in a dramatic form. (Cf. Prof. Masson's edition of *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, i. 47.)

[1] In Nourmahal's madness at the close, however, Dryden compensates himself for his previous moderation.—Charles II altered an incident in this play, and pronounced it to be the best of all Dryden's tragedies.

himself to one of those trials of strength which his reckless genius loved. In the Preface to the tragedy of *All for Love, or The World Well Lost* he takes credit for a more exact observance of the unities of time, place, and action 'than perhaps the English theatre requires.' But he boldly rejects the models of the Ancients as 'too little for English tragedy;' and freely declares that he has not observed 'the nicety of manners of the French,' 'who want the genius which animates our stage.' He has taken Shakspere as his model for his style, and to do this the more freely has, without renouncing his theories on the subject, 'disencumbered' himself 'from rhyme.' As to the result, he hopes he may affirm that by imitating Shakspere he has 'excelled himself throughout the play,' particularly in the first scene between Antony and Ventidius.

Dryden abandons the use of rhyme in tragedy.

All for Love may be almost described as a trial of strength not only against Shakspere, upon whose *Antony and Cleopatra* Dryden's tragedy may be fairly said to be to some extent based, but against many of the chief wits of the nation before and after Shakspere. Dryden's complacency in the result is not wholly unjustified. In a sense, his tragedy is original; the character of Antony is drawn with considerable skill; the dominion which passion may acquire over a man is I think exhibited quite as effectively as in Shakspere—but Dryden's Antony lacks elevation. His Cleopatra is comparatively uninteresting. The writing is very good throughout; and the scene to which the author directs attention is undoubtedly admirable. The construction of the play is close and effective; and the tone of the whole is sufficiently moderated, without deserving the charge of tameness. Within certain limits, there assuredly never was a more flexible genius than Dryden's. The tasks which he set himself, without properly speaking failing in them, are many and extraordinary; in this instance he cannot be said to rival Shakspere on his own ground, but he follows him on it without being guilty either of servile imitation or of a competition which can be described as a failure.

All for Love and Antony and Cleopatra.

Passing by the outrageous comedy of *Limberham, or*

Limberham (1678).

The Kind Keeper (acted 1678), the merits of which wholly fail to redeem its indecency, while its professed moral is entirely lost in its undoubted personal purpose[1], we come to a play in which Dryden, contrary to his custom and that of his age, co-operated with another author. The tragedy of *Œdipus* (acted late in 1678) was the joint composition of Dryden and Lee, the former having arranged the plan of the whole and contributed the first and third acts[2]. This tragedy, which it would be instructive to compare at length with the works on the same subject by Sophocles and by Corneille, is both written with great power and constructed with no ordinary skill[3]. Wherein then lies the reason of its horrors being as intolerable to the reader, as on an attempted revival of the play they appear to have proved to the spectators[4]? Dryden, I think, did not perceive what is the nature of the Greek trilogy, which provides the opportunity of a harmonious solution of even the most terrible situations. Thus the awful events of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* are bearable because of the peaceful termination which awaits them in the *Œdipus Coloneus*[5]. But from a

Dryden and Lee's Œdipus (1678).

[1] The character of Limberham was generally applied to Lauderdale; probably there were also features of Shaftesbury in it, and in this sense only may the asseveration of the Preface, that in this play 'no one character has been drawn from any single man,' be accepted. *Limberham* was stopped after having been acted thrice.

[2] Act ii clearly betrays an inferior hand; Lee's rant (for there is a distinction of style even in rant) is different from Dryden's.

[3] Dryden has upon the whole adhered to the Greek myth, though (notwithstanding his opinion—see Preface—that the ancient method which dispenses with an under-plot, as it is the easiest, is perhaps also the most natural and the best) he has thought it necessary to invent an under-plot. This (dealing with Eurydice and Adrastus) is at all events noble in conception, though the method of interweaving it with the main action (observe the suddenness of Creon's change in ii. 1) is rather audacious. The examination of Phorbas (iv. 1) seems to me one of the most effective situations with which I am acquainted in the whole range of the modern Drama.

[4] Scott states than when the play was revived about 1778 (there is no notice of this occasion in Geneste) the audience were unable to support the play to an end, and the boxes were all emptied before the Third Act was concluded.

[5] Cf. Schneidewin, *Einleitung zum Œdipus auf Kolonos*, p. 31, where the close of the *Philoctetes* is compared.—I think that, *mutatis mutandis*, a not dissimilar contrast might be drawn between the *Prometheus Vinctus* of Æschylus and the *Prometheus Unbound* of Shelley. In the latter the conflict is only *stated*—in

tragedy like Dryden's the mind revolts as from a banquet of horrors, which no outward ornament can enable us to endure.

Dryden's Truth Found Too Late and its Preface: The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy (1679).

With his version of *Troilus and Cressida* (printed in 1679[1]) with the additional title of *Truth Found Too Late* Dryden published, besides an Epistle Dedicatory associating itself with the same range of ideas[2], a Preface holding a noteworthy place among his critical essays. After dwelling on the alterations introduced by him into the original play, he proceeds to a consideration of *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy.* Having examined the Aristotelian definition of tragedy, he proceeds to expound the proper nature of a tragic action. It must be *one* (here he refers to the innovation of a double action, introduced by Terence and adopted by the modern drama); it must have order; it must be great; it must be probable (though not necessarily historically true). He then passes to a consideration of the chief desiderata in dramatic plots, manners and characters, dwelling on the imperfections of Shakspere and Fletcher in the first, and of the French (the manners in whose plays are always French) in the second point. In the third point he extols Shakspere for the distinctness of his characters, which implies his understanding of the passions he depicts—while Fletcher, who excelled 'in the softer' as Shakspere did 'in the more manly passions,' is, 'to conclude all,' described as 'a limb of Shakespeare.'

the former (even without the help of Droysen's beautiful endeavour to expound the probable character of the entire Promethean trilogy, *Des Aischylos Werke übersetzt*, second edition, 1841) we seem to perceive the solution as well as the problem.

[1] Cf. vol. i. p. 288, note. To what has there been said it need only be added that Dryden has redeemed Cressid's character by making her kill herself. Chaucer was sorry for her,—Dryden thinks that this mixture of pity and reproach will not suffice, and thus ventures entirely to alter the traditional character of the catastrophe.

[2] It is here that Dryden broached his notion of an Academy of the English Language—one of those schemes for which our age is of course too enlightened to have anything but a sneer.—As a curious parallel to Dryden's complaints, it may be noticed that when Goethe was turning his attention to opera and learning Italian, he complained warmly of the 'barbarous' character of his native tongue. (Düntzer, *Charlotte von Stein*, i. 251.) Such complaints made by two poets, each of whom was master of his own language, are striking, whatever degree of foundation they may be held to possess.

Dryden's change of stand-point in his views of tragedy.

It is thus clear that a revolution had gradually taken place in Dryden's views of the serious drama; that he was no longer enamoured of the irregularity of the Elisabethans, but desired unity and closeness of form in the action of tragedy, while the element he commended for imitation in Shakspere (and Fletcher) was the power of characterisation. Undoubtedly Dryden now saw more truly what was worthiest of admiration, and worthiest of imitation, in the great masters of the national drama. Undoubtedly, when he indited such criticism, he sealed the doom in his own mind of that false and meretricious style of tragedy which his example alone had domesticated on the English stage and in English literature. But while he had the wisdom to perceive, and the candour to proclaim, much of the truth, he lacked,—perhaps at all times, certainly now at this advanced stage of his career,—the power to become a living example of the doctrines which he professed[1].

The Spanish Friar(1681).

For that branch of the drama which he held in inferior regard his powers indeed still more than sufficed. The comic portion of the tragi-comedy of *The Spanish Friar, or The Double Discovery* (acted 1681) is generally acknowledged to be one of Dryden's happiest dramatic efforts. Of the two well-combined[2] plots the comic one bears a partial resemblance to that of Fletcher's *The Spanish Curate*[3]; the Friar is however himself by no means a copy of the Curate, but a fat rascal of incontestable originality. This part of the plot is carried on with much spirit; and its central figure is one of the most humorous creations of our later drama, which no confessional scruples or biographical theories need hinder the modern reader from

[1] See on this Essay Hettner's remarks, *u. s.*, pp. 92–93.

[2] Perhaps Dr. Johnson, and Scott after him, have (though on different grounds) unnecessarily extolled Dryden's skill in making the serious and the comic plots in this play tally with one another. I can see nothing extraordinarily skilful in the construction of *The Spanish Friar*, though certainly the two plots are here combined with greater ease than in other instances. The same view is, I find, taken by the critic of *The Retrospective Review*, *u. s.*

[3] Cf. *ante*, p. 215.

enjoying [1]. As for the serious plot, though interesting and not ineffective, it has the great blemish of making the heroine (Leonora) *morally* guilty of a crime and thus unworthy of sympathy [2]. The writing of this play in both its serious and comic portions is throughout admirable. Dryden was by this time master of an easy but dignified movement in his blank-verse; and his comic prose dialogue, as exemplified by this play, has not to my knowledge ever been surpassed [3].

Lee and Dryden's The Duke of Guise (1682).

The political atmosphere, of which the signs are always legible in the productions of a writer like Dryden, had become far more heavily laden when (in December 1682) he in conjunction with Lee produced the tragedy of *The Duke of Guise*. Dryden had already at an earlier period composed some scenes on the subject, of which he now made use; Lee contributed the remainder, which he supplemented by some scenes and passages from a play which he too had lying by him on the theme, familiar to the English drama, of *The Massacre of Paris* [4]. Whatever credit may be given to the *Vindication* afterwards published by Dryden, it is not denied even there that the tragedy of *The Duke of Guise* was produced with a political intention. 'Our play's a parallel'—says the Prologue; and

[1] Dryden, as incidentally remarked above (p. 459, note 2), like other contemporary dramatists, entertained a cordial hatred of priests; but it would be a mistake to suppose that any evidence of special bitterness against the Church of Rome is to be found in this play. The Epilogue, which draws a moral in that direction, is not by Dryden. At the same time, in consequence of the recent supposed discovery of a Popish Plot (1678) he went further in his satire than he would probably have done under other circumstances. It would lead me too far to discuss the bearing of his authorship of this play upon the general history of his religious opinions and personal character—as to which I can only say that I greatly differ from the late Mr. Christie.

[2] Torrismond should have *erroneously* supposed Leonora to have sanctioned the order for his father's death, instead of her really doing so.

[3] In *The Spanish Friar* occurs a statement which Dr. Johnson appears to have plagiarised in his famous political aphorism as to the real founder of the Whig party:

> 'That's a stale cheat;
> The primitive rebel, Lucifer, first used it,
> *And was the first reformer of the skies.*'

[4] Cf. vol. i. p. 192. Lee's *Massacre of Paris* was produced in 1690 (*cf. infra.*)

it is of little moment that Dryden afterwards insisted that the parallel was one 'not of the men, but of the times.' The Epilogue, which is designed as an onslaught upon the 'Trimmers,' disputes the justice of the theory that 'Whigs must talk and Tories hold their tongue;' and by this tragedy two Tories had certainly endeavoured to contribute their share to the popular contention. The Lord Chamberlain (Arlington) however perceived that the parallel might be carried too far by the spectators; and *The Duke of Guise* was not allowed to be acted till the height of the popular excitement was over, though the strife was soon to revive in another form [1].

In days when, to borrow Scott's expression, the stage 'absolutely foamed with politics,' when Settle derided the Church of Rome by exhibiting the history of a female

[1] The situation of the national affairs seemed to have arrived at its crisis during the 'times' to which this play furnishes a parallel. The return of Monmouth to London in 1679 (cf. in the play the appearance of Guise at Paris), the continued Popish Plot prosecutions 1678-9, and the removal of Shaftesbury from office (1679) had provided the Opposition with a hero, a pretext, and a leader. The Exclusion Bill agitation of 1680 had brought the Whigs (as about this time they began to be called) into direct conflict with the Court. In 1681, notwithstanding a petition to the contrary of sixteen Whig peers (cf. in the play i. 1, the Council of Sixteen), the famous Parliament was held at Oxford (cf. in the play the States-General at Blois). In November, 1681, the bill of indictment against Shaftesbury was presented to the Middlesex Grand Jury, and the documentary evidence relied upon by the Crown consisted (see Christie's *Life of Shaftesbury*, ii. 423) in 'a project of association' found among his papers, though unsigned and not in his handwriting, 'for Defence of the Protestant religion and of the King and Parliament, and for the prevention of the Duke of York's accession' (cf. the League in the play, and see also Prologue). In December, 1682, Shaftesbury was a refugee abroad, and Monmouth under arrest.—In the *Vindication of the Duke of Guise* (1683) against attacks by Shadwell and others, Dryden, after asserting that he undertook the play in 1660, that the scene of Guise's return was taken almost *verbatim* from Davila's work *Delle Guerre Civili di Francia*, upon which other passages were likewise founded, and that he had asked the Lord Chamberlain to satisfy his scruples by a comparison, points out at length how a parallel between Henry III and Charles II would be monstrous &c., how he had no intention of attacking Monmouth &c., and how the whole charge against himself was a mere party-trick. It must therefore be left for the reader to determine for himself how much and how little of the parallel has a special application—whether *e.g.* the fair Marmoutière in the play was really meant for the Duchess of Monmouth. One 'parallel,' which cannot have been designed, is singularly infelicitous, though it was hardly to be avoided; for Navarre, the rightful heir, corresponds to James Duke of York!

Pope, and Shadwell held up both Roman Catholics and High Churchmen to reprobation and contempt, it is not to be wondered that the author of *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medal* should have as a dramatist also mingled in the fray. If the 'Protestant flail' was at work in the theatre as well as in the streets, it was natural that the master of a weapon unsurpassed in keenness and brightness should have been eager once more to support a friend in his attack upon their common adversaries. But in truth Dryden seems to have contributed little[1] to a play which possesses no interest corresponding to the occasion which produced it; and considering the impossibility that in a play permitted to be acted he should have approached the direct force of his great political poem, as well as the general incompatibility of dramatic action with satirical allegory, his self-restraint is not to be regretted. The parts written by Lee are to be commended for the absence of rant[2].

Dryden's Albion and Albanius (1685).

The taste for political allegory to which we owe Dryden's literary master-piece was still strong in him, when he conceived the notion of composing as 'a prologue to a play of the nature of *The Tempest*[3]'—in other words to the 'dramatic opera' of *King Arthur* afterwards actually produced by him—an operatic entertainment allegorically representing the chief events of King Charles II's reign. The history of *Albion and Albanius* was however doubly unfortunate. The cycle of its allegory seemed complete, when Fate intervened with her own catastrophe. The courtly poet had brought before the spectators the city Augusta (London) in the days when Democracy and Zelota held sway over it and the land. He had shown

[1] He wrote the opening scene, the whole of act iv (where the supposed parallel between Guise and Monmouth was found, and where the citizens are ridiculed), and the first part of act v (where he was supposed to have recommended the assassination of the hero).

[2] The same remark is made by Scott. The odd story of Malicorn is said to be from a French source; the infernal agency is very much out of place here, though the demagogic tricks of the devil Melanax are effective (see iv. 2 and iv. 4, where Melanax appears among the citizens in a 'fanatic habit,' to address to them 'a word of godly exhortation' to sedition. Was this meant for the 'Protestant joiner' Stephen College (executed in 1681)?

[3] See Preface to *Albion and Albanius*.

how Archon (Monk) had charmed the Revolution to sleep, and how then the royal brothers Albion (Charles II) and Albanius (James Duke of York) had returned to a rejoicing people. In implacable wrath the fiends had resorted to the expedient of forging a plot (the 'Popish Plot'), of which 'the basest, blackest of the Stygian band' (Titus Oates [1]) was appointed the denouncer. For a time faction had triumphed, and the good Albanius was driven into exile. But sedition was divided among itself—the White Boys (Monmouth's adherents) quarrelling with the Sectaries with 'Protestant flails.' Then a real plot (the Rye-House Plot), with a one-eyed archer (Rumbold) for its chief instrument, had been formed and revealed—the eyes of the nation had been opened, and the good Albanius had returned.

So far the opera seemed complete, and it was actually in rehearsal, when the original of Albion died—how, is well enough known. An apotheosis of Albion and a glorification of the accession had accordingly to be added; and a new royal virtue, not very prominent in the days of good King Albion, having now shone forth upon the nation, the Epilogue celebrates 'Plain Dealing' as constituting for the first time 'the jewel of a crown.'

But the misfortunes of this unlucky opera were not yet over. It had only been performed for the sixth time (on June 13th, 1685, having been produced on the 3rd of the same month) when the news of Monmouth's landing arrived in London. The opera was never acted again. It will suffice to say of it, that it is conceived with as extravagant an artificiality as characterises any composition of its class. Criticism is therefore needless; and it is likewise needless to add that Dryden's lyric talent enabled him, even in a composition bearing the marks of haste, to produce some-

[1] His character is drawn with a gusto showing that even Corah had not exhausted the author's powers of giving expression to his hatred. In the opera he is represented as a personage who had gone through a metempsychosis of villains from Cain downwards, till at last he had

> 'gained a body fit for sin,
> Where all his crimes
> Of former times
> Lie crowded in a skin.' (ii. 1.)

thing very different from *The Siege of Rhodes* in the way of versification. All the same, the jingle of the short lines is hardly to be endured[1].

King Arthur, or The British Worthy (1691).

Dryden, it may be at once stated, was not prevented by the ill fate of *Albion and Albanius* from writing the 'dramatic opera' to which it had been originally designed to serve as a prelude. *King Arthur, or The British Worthy* was performed and printed in 1691, and with the aid of Purcell's music, proved very successful. It possesses a certain interest from the fact that its subject was one which both Milton and Dryden intended to treat as an epos[2]. The historical—or quasi-historical—theme is however treated very flimsily by the latter in his 'dramatic opera[3]'; and the main interest of the production, such as it is, turns on the rival passions of Arthur and the heathen King of Kent for the blind Emmeline. Her blindness is treated with a mixture of naïveté and something quite the reverse; and this attempt in a direction in which few dramatists have ventured with success, is only noteworthy as a proof that no art in the poet—or, it may be added, in the actor—can render tolerable on the stage the *analysis* of a physical infirmity. Such an infirmity may indeed occasionally be represented with great and legitimate effect; but its analysis is beyond the sphere of the drama[4]. The conception of Philidel, the fallen

[1] The music, composed by Charles II's French band-master Grabu, was much ridiculed by Dryden's enemies, who of course rejoiced in the misfortunes of his opera.

[2] It is known how what they failed to accomplish was executed by Blackmore—after his own fashion, 'between the rumbling of his coach's wheels.' (See Dryden's *Secular Mask*.)

[3] The studies which Dryden professes to have made of 'the rites and customs of the heathen Saxons' may without want of charity be described as more or less of a pretence.

[4] I say this with a full remembrance of the grace and purity characterising the representation—by the only living English actress to whom a poetic creation of this description could be entrusted with safety—of the English version of the Danish poet H. Herz's *King René's Daughter*.—In *King Arthur*, as in this modern romantic drama, the heroine recovers her sight in the course of the piece.—It may be added, that the political significance of Dryden's opera is small; the tag concerning the future is intentionally short and unhopeful; for the poet was now a malcontent.

but repentant angel, seems Dryden's own. For the rest, *King Arthur*, according to its kind, contains a good deal of magical business—not altogether original.

Don Sebastian (1690).

After the Revolution of 1688 Dryden produced but few plays. Of these the tragedy of *Don Sebastian* (acted 1690) has received very high praise, and Scott repeatedly pronounces it Dryden's dramatic master-piece. In one respect it certainly deserves high acknowledgment. Dryden has here, in accordance with the views developed in his last critical essay on the drama, carefully and powerfully developed two tragic characters—Sebastian and Dorax. Passages too are indisputably very fine; but as a whole the play is, as the author frankly confesses, obnoxious to the charge of lengthiness, especially in the quasi-comic parts, where a thin staple of humour is long drawn-out. Moreover the plot—a grafting upon a story already familiar to the English drama of an invention by Dryden himself which has no organic connexion with the opening situation,—is too harrowing to be borne; and the dramatic solution attempted is, though morally satisfactory, too artificial to content the sense of probability. And while there is much that is powerful in the delineation of the fatal passion of the hero and heroine, the tone, though not the conception, of the close wants elevation. In general, however, the style of this play, notwithstanding an element of rant in its earlier part, is forcible; while in the serious scenes it often deserves an even higher tribute[1].

Amphitryon (1690).

In the comedy of *Amphitryon* (acted 1690), for which

[1] The plot turns upon the strange story of Sebastian of Portugal, which Massinger had treated in his *Believe as You List* (*ante*, p. 287), and to which Beaumont and Fletcher refer in their *Wit at Several Weapons* (i. 2). Dryden's invention is the fatal passion between Sebastian and his sister, while unaware of their relationship. At the conclusion Sebastian determines to seclude himself in a desert for life. The whole play shows that the desire of seeking effect in the strange and the horrible was incurable in its author.—A discerning eye will perceive (not only in the Prologue) more than one allusion to the times in which the play was produced. That Dryden's contempt for the rabble was as intense as ever, is not surprising; but it may be worth noticing with what scorn the character of the Mufti is drawn in this tragedy. *Dryden was consistent in his hatred of priests even after his change of confession.*

Dryden made use of both Plautus and Molière[1], the fire of his genius—though fed by gross materials—once more burns forth with magnificent brightness. Of the immorality of this long popular[2] play I need not speak—but the writing is admirable, and in parts nothing less than magnificent.

Cleomenes, the Spartan Hero(1692).

The tragedy of *Cleomenes, the Spartan Hero* (acted 1692), sought to continue the endeavour made in *Don Sebastian;* and the character of Cleomēnes (*sic* usually in this play) must be allowed to be worked out with considerable care. That of Cassandra is not very effective; and the youthful Cleonidas was, as Scott suggests, probably modelled on Hengo in Fletcher's *Bonduca*[3]. The plot, though based on Plutarch, is to a great extent original; that it had a political intention was probably nothing but a delusion on the part of Queen Mary's anxious Government (which however *a priori* might well be excused for its supposition.) The form occasionally lapses into rhyme. Part of the fifth act is by Southerne.

Love Triumphant (1694).

Dryden produced one more play, the tragi-comedy of *Love Triumphant, or Nature will Prevail* (acted 1694). It proved wholly unsuccessful—to the credit, it must be allowed, of the public, justly sick of the treatment of supposed incestuous passions, such as that which forms the theme of the serious plot of this play. The quasi-comic scenes fall quite flat; the more passionate parts are generally in rhyme.

Epilogue, etc. for Fletcher's The Pilgrim (1700).

Thus it might seem as if in dramatic—though not in other branches of composition—the glorious hand had at last lost its cunning, before it was stayed by death. Dryden lived, however, to write what may be regarded as the epilogue to his dramatic works—the *Prologue, Song, Secular Mask and Epilogue for* (Fletcher's) *The Pilgrim*, which play was revived for the benefit of the old poet in the year 1700. The Mask has been already noticed[4];

[1] He added however, from his own invention, the intrigue of Mercury with Phaedra (Alcmena's serving-maid).

[2] An odd attempt was made in our own day (1872) to revive it—in a Bowdlerised form which was hardly likely to be enjoyed by many unacquainted with the splendid original, and certainly by none familiar with it.

[3] Cf. *ante*, p. 197.

[4] *Ante*, p. 202, note 2.

Dryden's apology.

it is to the Epilogue, and its reference to Jeremy Collier's recent attack upon the stage, that attention may here be particularly directed. Its tone contains the admixture of banter usual in this species of composition—but there is a more than passing significance in the attempt of the poet, now looking back upon the dramatic labours of himself and his contemporaries, to shift the responsibility of their sins against morality from the stage and its poets to the Court. The charge which he thus brings against those the sunshine of whose favour he had formerly sought may be less generous than true; and if true, it recoils with the most crushing force upon him whose genius made him, more than upon any other man, responsible for the guardianship of the temple which, under influences however powerful, he helped to pollute. But an avowal of a share in the guilt is implied in the very endeavour to transfer its responsibility. Nor was the—with all its faults—manly mind of Dryden unequal to a full confession of his own wrong. Not many years previously he had made such a confession—in words which thrill me to the soul as often as they recur to my memory:

'O gracious God! how far have we
Profaned thy heavenly gift of Poesy!
Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,
Debased to each obscene and impious use,
Whose harmony was first ordained above,
For tongues of angels and for hymns of love!
Oh wretched we! why were we hurried down
This lubric and adulterate age,
Nay, added fat pollutions of our own,
To increase the steaming ordures of the stage?
What can we say to excuse our second fall[1]?'

Dryden's moral errors as a dramatist.

That which Dryden could not say for himself, it is needless for a later lover of his genius to attempt to say for him. It cannot be truthfully urged on Dryden's behalf that manhood and old age, which mellowed his literary powers, refined his literary morality in his career as a dramatist[2]. The magnificent style of his *Amphitryon* can

[1] Ode *To the Pious Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew* (published with her poems 1686.)

[2] Elsewhere it is gratifying to find Dryden mindful of the truth that

no more conceal his sins against good manners than the crudity of his *Wild Gallant* can excuse them. He was as little able to resist the temptation of painting vice of a particular kind in attractive colours as the puniest of his rivals or would-be rivals, and his defence of the leniency with which at times he deals out dramatic justice to his vicious characters in comedy is as shallow as he must have known it to be [1].

Character and range of his dramatic powers.

But while only a perverse misinterpretation of the claims of genius will excuse in a great writer what it blames in a small, it would be an altogether oblique view of Dryden as a dramatist which should see in a defect shared by him with many others a distinctive characteristic of his dramatic productions. As a dramatist he exhibits qualities raising him above the level of any of his competitors—though less conspicuously so than in one or two other branches of literature illustrated by his genius. Its flexibility enabled him in both tragedy and comedy to excel all—or very nearly all—his contemporaries. In the former he began by deferring to a radically erroneous taste to which nothing but his example—not even his own brilliant theoretical sophistries—could have secured the vitality it displayed. But for the brilliancy of style which he lavished upon them, heroic plays would be as unendurable to posterity as their rule would have been short-lived in the age which gave birth to them. In these, and in his later efforts in the tragic drama, when he gradually came

'it is never too late to mend.' The *Fables* (or tales adapted from Boccaccio and Chaucer, published 1700) are upon the whole (though by no means uniformly) characterised by decency of tone. Dryden accordingly felt himself secure enough to deprecate the severity of Collier's attack upon his earlier and really objectionable works, and to turn the point of his adversary's weapon with some skill upon that adversary himself. In short, he insinuates that, 'the parson' conveniently collects the offences of the stage, as Byron would have put it, in an 'appendix.' See the introductory lines (*Poeta loquitur*) to *Cymon and Iphigenia*. In *The Wife of Bath's Tale* in the *Fables* Dryden adopts a line of defence similar to that taken in the Epilogue to *The Pilgrim*.

[1] See the Preface to *An Evening's Love*, where he argues with characteristic audacity that 'we make not vicious persons happy, but only as Heaven makes sinners so; that is, by reclaiming them first from vice.'

to recognise in characterisation the highest task and the surest test of dramatic power, he indeed never passed beyond the limits of the themes to which the tragedy of the age had arbitrarily restricted itself. Love and honour were the pivots upon which the mimic world of his tragedies turned. In the delineation of these passions he was approached by Lee—but at how considerable an interval may be best seen from the works which they composed jointly,—while in the reproduction of the most pathetic moments of love he was surpassed by Otway. In his use of far-fetched expedients for the provocation of terror he knew no bounds, freely confounding the extraordinary with the powerful, and momentary sensation with enduring effect. His diction was often even more excessive than his action; but the former was the product of a real natural force, which must have been irresistible when aided by the effect of Betterton's 'well-govern'd voice,' and which even the modern reader will not find it easy to withstand [1]. For comedy Dryden at times expressed a dislike resembling contempt, at times declared himself not naturally fitted. 'I want,' he said, 'that gaiety of humour which is required to it [2];' and 'even in his own partial judgment' he held that some of his contemporaries had outdone him in this branch of the drama [3]. He was I think doubly mistaken. Beginning with a reproduction of those Spanish plots which pleased the age but which are in truth delusive perversions of the real excellences of dramatic construction, he rarely took the trouble to construct a good plot, though he was manifestly capable of doing so [4]. That he was unequal to the con-

[1] 'Though I will not say,' Shadwell wrote of Dryden in the Preface to *The Humourists* (1671), 'his is the best way of writing, yet, I am sure, his manner of writing is the best that ever was . . . he has more of that in his writing which Plato calls *σώφρονα μανίαν*, than any other Heroick Poet. And those, who shall go about to imitate him, will be found to flutter and make a noise, but never rise.'

[2] *Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy.*

[3] *Epistle Dedicatory to Aureng-Zebe.*

[4] See *The Spanish Friar.*

ception of comic character would (even if he had never written a comedy) be a charge too ludicrous to need refutation; that he succeeded in its dramatic presentation has been sufficiently shown by the examples noticed in the preceding pages, ranging from the excellent high comedy of *Secret Love* to the equally excellent low comedy of *The Spanish Friar*. It is surely strange criticism which considers a third-rate writer like Crowne to have surpassed Dryden in comedy: in truth there was no rival whom he needed to fear, and only one—his adversary Shadwell—who surpassed him in fertility, though falling far behind him in finish, of dramatic characterisation. Of the prose dialogue of comedy he was master whenever he chose to exert his powers in this direction; here, as in the dialogue of rhymed tragedy, he was without a peer, till the vigour of Wycherley and the brilliant wit of Congreve announced the beginning of a new generation of comic dramatists. No one was more ready to welcome them than Dryden, one of the kindliest befrienders of younger talent whom the world of letters has ever known. While recognising the merits of Wycherley as well as those of Etherege and Southerne in terms generously chosen, he addresses Congreve in a strain which breathes, together with magnanimous delight in the merits of his successor, the conscious pride of a legitimate sovereign:

His pre-eminence among the dramatists of his age.

> 'Well had I been deposed if you had reign'd!
> The father had descended for the son,
> For only you are lineal to the throne[1].'

The sway which he thus resigned he had exercised with an authority neither unchallenged nor well guarded by himself. But, taking his dramatic works all in all, his pre-eminence seems indisputable; and the Restoration drama in the stricter sense of the term will be best understood and best appreciated by those who regard Dryden as its central figure. Its faults and its vices are reflected in him with sufficient distinctness to teach us what to shun; of its merits and its excellences

Dryden the representative Restoration dramatist.

[1] *To my dear friend Mr. Congreve, on his Comedy called The Double-Dealer.*

few are wanting in its foremost representative, or fail to shine with incomparable brilliancy in the productions of the greatest master of style who has ever adorned our literature.

His Prologues and Epilogues.

Before parting from Dryden, I must not omit to direct special attention to his *Prologues* and *Epilogues*. The freedom of expression which the stage assumed after its restoration, naturally extended itself in the fullest measure to those adjuncts of the drama which had never been subject to any strict rules of art. Soon the Prologues and Epilogues became, far more uniformly and distinctly than they had been in any previous period, opportunities for the dramatist to enter as it were into conversation with his audience, and to discourse with them not only in a more or less apologetic tone concerning the play and its author, but about themselves also, and on whatever topic might suggest itself for comment—from the politics of the nation to the foibles of the fair. At the same time, since it was not the poet himself, but one of the actors or at least as frequently one of the actresses who spoke these addresses, an outspokenness could be with impunity indulged in which would scarcely have been possible under any other combination of circumstances. Jeremy Collier is eloquent on the licence which the dramatic poets of the age permitted themselves in these Prologues and Epilogues. It is perhaps too much to say that they corresponded to the parabasis of Athenian comedy; for the liberty of comment permitted by the tastes of the King, or encouraged because of the advantages to be incidentally derived from it, cannot be compared to the popular freedom which enabled a poet to hurl his patriotic hatred in the face of the most powerful politician of the State. But, in skilful hands, and with the help of an acknowledged favourite like Betterton or a spoilt child like Nell Gwynn, there was ample scope for the exercise not only of ingenuity in the device, but of didactic and still more of satirical power in the contents, of these addresses. Thus it is not to be wondered that the curiosity of the

audience should often have directed itself to the Prologue quite as much as to the play itself [1], and that the most telling hit of a performance should at times have been made after the conclusion of the play. Dryden has nowhere exhibited his powers with greater prodigality of genius than in these ephemeral productions, which no admirer of his genius should pass by. So far as I have observed, the Prologues contain a greater admixture of the serious element than the Epilogues; but the rule is by no means unvarying [2].

Sir Robert Howard (1626–1698).

The name of SIR ROBERT HOWARD [3] (1626–1698) possesses some interest for us in connexion with the life and literary labours of his great brother-in-law; but though it is evident that the 'Crites' of the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* [4] was a man of culture as well as of acuteness, his dramatic works furnish no evidence of creative power of a high order. They comprise, besides *The Indian Queen* written in conjunction with Dryden and already noticed [5], two comedies and two tragedies. Of the former, *The Surprisal* (printed 1665) is commonplace; *The Committee* (printed 1665) is worth examining, as a curious picture or rather caricature of the manners of the later Commonwealth period, drawn by a hostile hand. The

His comedies: The Surprisal (pr. 1665). The Committee (pr. 1665).

[1] 'In former days
Good Prologues were as scarce as now good plays.
For the reforming poets of our age
In this first charge spend their poetic rage:
Expect no more when once the prologue 's done;
The wit is ended ere the play 's begun.
You now have habits, dances, scenes and rhymes,
High language often; ay, and sense sometimes.'
Prologue to the Rival Ladies.

It should not be forgotten that these Prologues and Epilogues were as heretofore often written by popular authors to aid the plays of friends, or for a fee; and that they were, as Mr. R. Bell states (in his edition of the *Poetical Works* of Dryden, iii. 172), 'printed on broadsides, and sold at the doors of the theatres.'

[2] All Dryden's Prologues and Epilogues are printed in Mr. Christie's (Globe) edition.

[3] *The Dramatic Works of Sir Robert Howard.* Third Edition, 1722. (This contains the Preface, cited *ante*, p. 503, note 1, to the '*Four New Plays*' published in 1665.)

[4] Cf. *ante*, p. 503.

[5] *Ante*, p. 497.

plot turns on the rascalities perpetrated by members of Committees of Sequestration in keeping or turning rightful owners out of their property for political disaffection; but the attack is made after so coarse a fashion that the edge of the satire is blunted[1]. The play however contains some good rough fun. Of Howard's tragedies I may pass by *The Vestal Virgin, or The Roman Ladies* (printed 1665), mostly in rhyme, but not otherwise remarkable, unless it be for the fact that it has two conclusions like Suckling's *Aglaura*[2], in order to say a word of *The Duke of Lerma* (printed 1668), a play of some merit, and possessing some interest as a protest (only partial, however) on Howard's part against the theories advocated by Dryden[3]. The Epilogue, alluding to the form in which this tragedy is mainly written, describes it as

His tragedies: The Vestal Virgin, or The Roman Ladies (fr. 1665). The Duke of Lerma (pr. 1668).

'A melancholy Plot tied with strong lines.'.

In contrast with the abstinence imposed upon the stage in earlier times[4], the nature of this plot is striking. It is indeed

[1] Mr. Day, the Chairman to the Committee, is represented as a vile kind of Tartuffe. The socially ambitious Mrs. Day is better; and one cannot help being amused with the sheepish son Abel Day, and with Obadiah the Clerk to the Committee, whom Teague the faithful Irishman (a character said by Dibdin, iv. 115, to have been copied from Howard's own Irish servant, and thought by Pepys, *Diary*, June 12th, 1663, to be 'beyond imagination') makes drunk, and causes to sing and 'snuff' in honour of the King. Teague is drawn with much spirit, and has another capital scene in which he 'takes the covenant' by robbing a bookseller of a copy thereof (ii. 1). For an amusing story as to the application of 'Obadiah' in this play to Dr. Obadiah Walker of Oxford see Cibber's *Apology* (second edition), p. 383. 'Teague' seems henceforth to have become the favourite name for the stage Irishman; see Shadwell's *The Amorous Bigot* and its continuation *Teague O'Divelly*, and Mrs. Centlivre's *A Wife Well Manag'd.*—When Sir Roger de Coverley was taken by Mr. Spectator to see *The Distrest Mother*, he assured his companion that 'he had not been at the Play for these twenty years. The last I saw,' said Sir Roger, 'was *The Committee*, which I should not have gone to neither, had I not been told before-hand that it was a good Church-of-England Comedy.' (*The Spectator*, No. 335.)

[2] *Ante*, p. 350.

[3] In the Preface to this tragedy Howard declines to say 'why he writ this Play partly in Rhyme, partly in Blank Verse;'—he had no better reason than 'Chance which waited upon his present fancy,' and 'expects no better a Reason from any Ingenious Person than his Fancy for which he best relishes.' This is certainly criticism, as well as authorship, made easy.

[4] See *ante*, p. 407; and cf. p. 454, note 1.

only partly historical [1]; for the heroine, Lerma's daughter, is I suppose a poetic substitute for the historical Lerma's son the Duke of Uzeda; and most of the incidents reproduced in the drama (certainly that of Lerma obtaining for himself a cardinal's hat as a supreme protection) took place in the reign of the old King (Philip III) and not in that of the new (Philip IV). Yet it is something of a change from the days of James I to find a foreign sovereign only recently deceased [2] and his Court thus frankly brought upon the stage in a play acted in the presence of the King before an audience, one of whom at least thought it designed as a reproach to 'our King' himself [3].

Whatever the design of this tragedy, its action, though undoubtedly crude in treatment, is interesting and stirring, and in the figure of Lerma there are some signs of originality of characterisation. The writing, however, though it here and there likewise shows a power above what is usual in this author [4], is upon the whole poor. As already observed, though rhyme is only used in parts, it is employed in some of the most important passages of the piece [5], so that the play could not fairly be thrown into the scale of either the advocates or the opponents of the 'new way' of tragic writing. In other respects, a discriminating judgment will I think value this tragedy as a proof of the fact that the spirit of the Elisabethan drama was not yet wholly extinct, even in the second-rate writers of the Restoration age.

[1] According to the Preface it was an improvement of a play which had been shown to Howard, but of which he retained very little in his own.

[2] Philip IV died in 1665.

[3] See Pepys' *Diary*, February 20th, 1668, where he notes firstly that the Prologue was most excellently spoken by 'Knipp and Nell,' secondly that the play was designed 'to reproach our King with his mistresses, that I was troubled with it, and expected it should be interrupted; but it ended all well, which salved all.'

[4] The passionate awakening of Lerma's love for his daughter (at the close of act iv) strikes me as finely conceived; and here is a passage written with real power:

> 'I do believe he knows what he does,
> But like a tired over-hunted Deer
> Treads fatal Paths offer'd by Chance and not
> Design'd by him.' (v. 2.)

[5] Cf. ii. 2; iii. 2; v. 2.

Elkanah Settle (1648–1724)

ELKANAH SETTLE (1648–1724), the Doeg of the Second Part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, has experienced the fate which is apt to befall the lesser enemies of great men of letters; but in his day he seems as a dramatist to have enjoyed a passing prospect of outshining Dryden in popularity. His *Empress of Morocco*, a tragedy in rhyme, was brought out (in 1673) in opposition to Dryden and D'Avenant's version of *The Tempest*, and appears to have been received with extraordinary favour both by the public and by the Court (where it was acted). A pamphlet was accordingly launched against it by the dramatist Crowne, with the assistance, it is instructive to observe, of Dryden —and Shadwell. Settle's career as a dramatist, however, proved as uncertain as his politics[1].

His Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa (1676).

A list of his plays appears to justify the admirable phrase of Langbaine, that he was 'addicted to tragedy;' and to indicate that undeviating originality was not his *forte*. I am however unable to give any account of any of his productions except *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa*, (acted 1676), noticeable as one of the plays founded directly upon one of the popular French romances of the age[2]. It furnishes a good example of a heroic play on a French love-story, written (in rhyme) without any trace of poetic afflatus, but upon the whole (though a few exceptions might be instanced) free from rant. In spite of the numerous deaths in the last act, and of the really pathetic conception of the character of the self-sacrificing Asteria,

[1] He began 'public life' as a Whig, and in the exciting times of 1680 testified to his Protestantism by a drama on the subject of Pope Joan (*The Female Prelate*) and by devising a pageant of The Burning of the Pope 'before Queen Besses' throne at Temple Bar;' but he afterwards became a Tory. His career as a dramatist was towards its close varied by the adaptation for Mrs. Mynn's booth at Bartholomew Fair of his operatic spectacle of *The Siege of Troy* (which he had produced at Drury Lane in 1701)—the aged poet himself taking the part of the Dragon. See H. Morley's *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair*, pp. 217, 284 *seqq.*—In the Dedication to his *Distressed Innocence, or The Princess of Persia* (printed 1691), quoted by Geneste (ii. 3), poor Settle writes: 'I grew weary of my little talent in Dramatics, and forsooth must be rambling into politics; and much I have got by it, for, I thank 'em, they have undone me.'

[2] Georges de Scudéry's *L'Illustre Bassa*. The copy which I possess is the original edition of 1677.

the whole leaves but a tame and commonplace impression. This is the result of the positive as well as the negative features which this class of plays exhibit. Here Turk and Persian, Mussulman Roxana and Christian Isabella, are equally colourless; and 'heroic love' is the sole pivot on which the action turns[1].

John Crowne (d. 1703 or post).

One of the most fertile of the dramatists of this period, whose labours were about equally divided between tragedy and comedy, and who attained to a certain eminence in both, was JOHN CROWNE[2] (died not before 1703). The son of a gentleman who afterwards became an Independent Minister in Nova Scotia, Crowne himself was in turn an ardent servant of the Stuart Court and an upholder of the Protestant principles of the Revolution. He seems to have enjoyed the special good-will of King Charles II, and, like other dramatists, to have been in turn patronised and abandoned by Rochester. His mask of *Calisto*[3] was

[1] The Epilogue puts this latter characteristic with remarkable candour (with evident allusion to D'Avenant and Dryden):

'How many has our Rhymer kill'd to-day?
What need of Siege and Conquest in a Play,
When Love can do the work as well as they?
Yet 'tis such Love as you've scarce met before,
Such Love I'm sure as English ground ne'er bore'—

or indeed any other ground outside the *Pays du Tendre*.

[2] *The Dramatic Works of John Crowne. With Prefatory Memoir and Notes.* (By James Maidment and W. H. Logan.) 4 vols. 1873-4.

[3] *Calisto, or The Chaste Nimph*, notwithstanding its attempt to give a decorous version of an indecorous myth, was to say the least an odd mask for presentation at the Court of Charles II (where it was performed by an equally strange medley of actors, including the princesses Mary and Anne, the Duke of Monmouth, and two of the King's mistresses). The Jupiter of the mask conducts himself after a fashion for which it could have hardly been possible to avoid finding an obvious parallel, according to the general (though not quite just) view of Charles II's system of government:

'All politic cares of every kind
I'll from my breast remove;
And will to-day perplex my mind
With never a thought but love.'

For the rest, this mask is extremely moral and extremely tedious. The virtue of Calisto, after prevailing against the passion of Jupiter and the detraction of a sister-nymph (Psecas), is finally rewarded by her being requested to 'accept the small dominion of a star.'—Dryden, whose privileges as Poet Laureate

presented at Court in 1675; but the King died before the performance of the comedy which some have considered Crowne's master-piece, and of which Charles had himself dictated the subject. Altogether the luck of this writer seems to have been as variable as his political principles—and, it may be added, as the nature of his dramatic efforts.

His tragedies:

Of his comedies I will speak below. As a writer of tragedy he holds a conspicuous place among the followers of several styles, for he can hardly be said to have a style of his own. Often happy in the choice and ingenious in the construction of his plots, he has a certain power of coarse but not ineffective characterisation. But he altogether lacks not only refinement, but elevation of sentiment; and in beauty of form cannot be said to approach Dryden. He is more successful as a writer of blank-verse than of rhymed couplets; though, as will be seen, he alternated between the two forms, apparently without entertaining any preference for either.

Juliana, or The Princess of Poland (1671).

Juliana, or The Princess of Poland (1671) is called a tragi-comedy, and is mainly in blank-verse. It is chiefly remarkable for a wild profusion of action; its plot appears to have no foundation in fact—at all events in Polish history; perhaps the original of the Cardinal ought to be looked for nearer home (—in France). The comic character of the Landlord in this play seems to have been considered humorous. History has again very little to do with the so-called *History of Charles the Eighth of France, or The Invasion of Naples by the French* (1672); and indeed this rhymed tragedy is no fortunate instance of an endeavour to treat a quasi-historical subject in the form of a 'heroic play.' Such interest as the play excites is absorbed by its wholly fictitious love-story; the action has to be helped on by ghosts; and the versification (though Rochester succeeded in culling one flower of extravagance from it, a passage about 'waves smiling on the sun') is in

The History of Charles VIII of France (1672).

were infringed by the employment in his place of Crowne for the composition of a mask, good-naturedly wrote an Epilogue to his rival's production; but even this the influence of Rochester prevented from being spoken.

general bald. *The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian* (1677), another heroic play, in two Parts, was successful enough to cost the poet the favour of Rochester. The applause obtained by Dryden's *Conquest of Granada* was doubtless the origin of Crowne's work, which was produced after the appearance of *The Rehearsal*, and thus helps to prove that this famous burlesque by no means 'killed' heroic plays. It would however not have been so easy for the wits to find points of attack in the *Jerusalem* as in the *Granada;* for Crowne usually moves on so low a level that it seems to cost him an effort even to rise into bombast. It would be marvellous that this commonplace production should have met with success, were it not that the theme was probably familiar enough to the spectators to make the scenic effects enjoyable in an exceptionally high degree[1]. Crowne's next tragedy, *The Ambitious Statesman, or The Loyal Favourite* (1679), appears to have been specially prized by the author. It is in a different style from the preceding play, and in blank-verse. This tragedy is certainly not deficient in vigour, and the plot (which boldly invents a history of the fortunes of Count Bernard VII d'Armagnac after Agincourt[2], and which bears some resemblance to that of Howard's *Duke of Lerma*[3]) is contrived with undeniable skill and effectiveness. But in none of Crowne's tragedies is the general though not uniform absence of poetic touches and of poetic elevation more perceptible than in this otherwise spirited work. It is as if a Marlowe without poetic genius were endeavouring to

The Destruction of Jerusalem, &c. (1677).

The Ambitious Statesman, or The Loyal Favourite (1679).

[1] Part I is mainly taken up with the love of a fictitious King of Parthia for the daughter of the Jewish High-Priest, and with the rebellion of the Pharisees (by whom other than Jewish 'Separatists' are obviously signified.) In Part II we have the destruction of the city and the loves of Titus and Berenice, which Racine had treated in his tragedy, reproduced by Otway (cf. *ante*, p. 474, note.)—In Part II, act iii, *ad fin.*, a famous passage from *The Merchant of Venice* is diluted.

[2] The traditional character, however, of this famous master of mercenaries, who 'estoit tenu pour très cruel homme et tiran et sans pitié' (from a contemporary journal quoted in Schmidt, *Gesch. Frankreich's*, ii. 222, note), well accords with that of Crowne's Constable.

[3] Cf. *ante*, p. 532.

restore to 'strong' characters rather than 'strong' lines their former dominion over the tragic drama. Here and there, however, the author seems to claim the right of indulging in the extravagance of expression in which his own age fairly outvied that of *Tamerlane* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, and ventures on flights of rant equal to anything in Lee[1]. In *Thyestes* (1681), partly founded on Seneca's tragedy of that name, which had been recently again translated into English[2], Crowne introduces a love-story between the children of Atreus and Thyestes, thus slightly mitigating the revolting impression made by the main plot, which spares the spectator none of the horrors of the myth[3]. This, as well as the two succeeding tragedies, is in blank-verse; and both of these, together with their successor, are on subjects from classical history. But, in order to be original at any cost, Crowne was not sparing in any of them of his inventive talents in the matter of love-plots.

Thyestes (1681).

[1] Thus the heroine when about to precede her lover in death, after sighing with a profundity which causes him to exclaim,

'Such a groan a breaking sphere would give'—

declares,

'I cannot talk or think too much of you;
The thoughts you loved me once, will make me think myself
Above an angel, and this sight of you
Make me disrelish all the Heavenly visions.
I say this openly before the world;
I scorn to tarry till we meet in death
And whisper it behind the globe in private'—

a curiously 'behind the scenes' notion of future bliss. On the death of the hero, the King cumulatively observes:

'Here falls a Pharaoh's tower, Ephesian temple,
The cost of ages, wonder of eternity.'

[2] By J. W(right) in 1674. To his translation (which is in heroics, with the exception of course of the choruses, parts of the latter being not ill rendered) he appended a burlesque called *Mock-Thyestes*, not worthy of notice. Comparing his 'mimick fare' with 'Heroique Fustian dressed in metre' the author asks the audience which it prefers, and

'Which raises most concern, which most surprise,
No plot, no characters, or no disguise?'

Jasper Heywood's translation of Seneca's *Thyestes* has been noted, vol. i. p. 107. The subject was afterwards treated by Crébillon in his *Atrée*, criticised at length in La Harpe, *Cours de Litt.*, vol. xv.

[3] Thyestes drinks his son's blood on the stage (in Seneca the fatal banquet is related by a Nuncius).—The audience seems to have been pleased with Crowne's play.

Thus, in *Darius, King of Persia* (1688), instead of following the estimable example of an earlier quasi-dramatic treatment of the same subject[1], he, allowing his judgment to be overborne by 'some he much regarded,' 'left out Statira and her two daughters[2],' and introduced instead an extravagant intrigue of his own device, the innocent love of Bessus' son for his father's wife Barzane. The rest of the play treats of the treason of Bessus and the noble conduct of Darius; and is not altogether uninteresting[3]. In *Regulus* (1692), which contains a large admixture of prose, the famous legend is nearly, though not quite, resolved into a love-story between Regulus and Fulvia, needlessly encumbered by reminiscences of Regulus' dead wife, who still more needlessly appears as a ghost. Though here as elsewhere Crowne only very occasionally rises to the height which his own themes demand, this tragedy also proves that he had in him some of the elements of a genuine dramatist; and that he at times looked back with a longing eye to more vigorous growths of English tragedy than those were to which he in the main attached himself[4]. Finally, in *Caligula* (1698), written during intervals of serious illness, and therefore not to be severely criticised, Crowne once more returned to rhyme. Of this tragedy it will suffice to say, that though a praiseworthy attempt at character-drawing is manifest in it,

Darius, King of Persia (1688).

Regulus (1672).

Caligula (1678).

[1] By the Earl of Stirling; cf. *ante*, p. 145.

[2] See the Dedication, where Crowne (who was certainly unlucky) gives an account of the misfortune which fell upon this play by the sudden illness of Mrs. Barry the actress on the night of its production.

[3] It is curious how much in this tragedy might have been regarded as an intentional historical parallel, devised by an admirer of King James II, to the fate and conduct of that monarch—had the play been produced a few months later than it was.

[4] A passage of some real feeling is the speech of Regulus, 'I know 't, sweet Fulvia,' &c. (v. 1).—The management of the plot, even supposing the legend to be history, is boldly unhistorical, especially in the part which the 'gallant Xantippus' is made to play. The prose-scenes, which are quasi-comic, deal with the ambitious intrigues of Asdrubal at Carthage, which State the poet treats with the utmost scorn (though we may be sure he intended no side-reference to Holland).—Later English plays have been written on the story of Regulus, but in dramatic literature the story is chiefly noticeable as entering into the conception of one of Calderon's best-known dramas, *El Principe Constante* (translated among Mr. D. F. M'Carthy's *Dramas of Calderon*, 1853).

the baldness of the form in general corresponds to the commonplace character of the sentiment [1].

His comedies:

As a writer of comedy, CROWNE in my judgment holds no high rank. In this as in the other branch of the drama his versatility enabled him to fall in with the prevailing tastes, and his political pliability to suit the different tempers of the audiences whom he desired to gratify. His comic dialogue is fluent both in prose and (in the one instance in which he resorted to this now unusual form) in verse; but his range of characters is limited, and the most original type produced by him and varied in several plays—that of the 'formal' fool—is nowhere, not even in *Sir Courtly Nice*, which has been held to surpass anything ever accomplished in comedy by Dryden, signalised by any great vigour of humour.

City Politics (1673).

Crowne's earliest comedy, *City Politicks* (1673 [2]), may be without unfairness contrasted with one of his latest, *The English Friar, or The Town Sparks* (1689). The former is a caricature of the City Whigs at the time of the Shaftesbury trial [3], the latter of the Court Catholics and their ghostly counsellors in the days of James II. *City Politicks* is indeed, unlike *The English Friar*, original; on the other hand it is executed without any attempt to adapt the locality in which it plays (Naples) to the allusions with which it brims over. Under a thin disguise, not deepened by the usual mock disclaimers in the Preface, will easily be recognised the 'Popish Plot' agitation, and its heroes Titus Oates and Stephen Colledge 'the Protestant joiner [4];'

[1] Those who like may compare with Crowne's tragedy the German play (by the late F. Halm, a pleasing though not powerful dramatist) of *Der Fechter von Ravenna*, a considerable part of which was translated in an article in *Fraser's Magazine*, March 1857, where I think rather excessive praise is bestowed upon the original—a work which enjoyed a great ephemeral celebrity. —The plot of Crowne's tragedy (in which Philo Judaeus takes part) adheres more closely to history than is usual with this author.

[2] It was revived in 1712, also a warm political season.

[3] One of the characters in the play is writing answers to *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medal* under the titles of '*Azariah and Hushai*' and '*The Medal Revers'd*'—the latter a title actually adopted for one of the rejoinders to Dryden.

[4] They appear as Dr. Panchy (who 'applies himself very much to the

while the Whigs are attacked as the fomenters of popular excitement. The plot of *The English Friar* was clearly suggested by Molière's *Tartuffe*, though not more than suggested[1]. The main characters are Father Finical and his patron (and all but victim) Lord Stately. The latter has those grand airs which Crowne loved to ridicule[2]; the former (who may have been intended as a portrait of Father Petre), with his mixture of godliness and worse than worldliness, and his power over women, is not altogether ill drawn; but he wears his cloak less artfully than the French hypocrite. *The Country Wit* (1675), a comedy of some gaiety and a great deal of coarseness, derives only part of its plot from Molière[3]. The chief novelty is the character of Sir Mannerly Shallow, to some extent (though his grand manners are but country manners) the prototype of the more famous Sir Courtly Nice. It may be questioned whether Crowne is quite successful in showing that the old-fashioned ways of this solemn 'country gull,' whose simplicity betrays him into the most hopeless

The English Friar, or The Town Spark (1689).

The Country Wit (1675).

Bible; I mean, to kiss it') and 'the Catholic bricklayer.' The identity of the lawyer Bartholine (whose peculiar way of talking Crowne takes great trouble to explain in the Preface) has been disputed.

[1] In his turn Crowne may have helped to suggest to Cibber the composition of *The Non-Juror* (1717), which however more closely follows *Tartuffe*. As the date of Cibber's play falls outside the period to which I have limited myself, I may here remark that this caricature is justified by the fact that it was designed to expose a real public evil, which threatened to fester like a sore in the commonwealth. The weakness of Cibber's satire lies in the fact that there probably were few non-jurors of Dr. Wulf's sanctimonious manners (Cibber himself felt this—see a passage descriptive of the Doctor as unlike the generality of non-jurors in act ii); it was hardly justifiable to transfer to a non-juring layman the outward characteristics associated, on the stage at least, with the opposite pole of religious hypocrisy. Of this comedy in general, though besides Dr. Wulf and his friend Sir John Woodvil the sprightly Maria is a good character, I think it may be said that it is a coarse play, and inferior to some of Cibber's earlier comedies noticed below.—In 1760 appeared Bickerstaffe's *The Hypocrite*, a new version of *The Non-Juror*, in which by the side of Dr. Cantwell, as the hero was now called, was introduced the new character of his attendant Mawworm.

[2] Another character recurring in Crowne is that of Young Ranter, 'a young debauch of Quality'—in other words a combination of the young man of fashion and the blackguard.

[3] From *Le Sicilien, ou L'Amour Peintre*, to which Steele was also indebted in his *Ths Tender Husband.*

of difficulties, are more deserving of satire than those of the town wits with whom he comes into contact. To us at least the brazen vice of the hero Ramble (duly forgiven at the end) is more of a satire on the age than the foolish softness of Sir Mannerly Shallow. In *Sir Courtly Nice, or It Cannot Be* (1685) Crowne, as already stated, is supposed by some to have achieved his comic master-piece; the play held the stage for nearly a century. It is however nothing more than a comedy with an extravagantly farcical plot (taken from the *No Pued Esser* of Moreto [1], and resembling the plots of Molière's least artistic productions), and with a number of eccentric characters—or the sketches of characters—antithetically mixed. Of these the intriguing scamp Crack was borrowed by Crowne from his original; the Aunt too (who is certainly amusing) has a genuine Duenna touch about her; of Crowne's own invention however are the choleric cavalier Hothead and the canting Puritan Testimony; and again Surly, a kind of Plain Dealer in speech, and one of the most disgusting figures in the whole range of English comedy, and his antitype Sir Courtly Nice himself. This latter is doubtless a happy example of the effeminate fop; but I cannot regard either this, or any of the other characters, as entitled to superlative praise.

Sir Courtly Nice, or It Cannot Be (1685).

Lastly, in *The Married Beau, or The Curious Impertinent* (1694), which is written in very fluent blank-verse, Crowne followed earlier models—and the play may be regarded as an attempt to return to the style of Fletcher and Shirley. The play is however to be condemned on account, not so much of the dangerous nature of the plot (recurring in other plays), which it borrows from a tale of Cervantes [2], as of the lubricity of treatment and the new ending—thoroughly peaceable and thoroughly immoral—which it gives to a subject in itself hardly to be tolerated on the stage.

The Married Beau, or The Curious Impertinent (1694).

[1] This plot was given to Crowne by King Charles II. The dramatist afterwards found that it had been already adapted by a previous writer, Thomas St. Serfe, in 1668.

[2] The *Curioso Impertinente* in *Don Quixote*. See Ticknor, ii. 119; and cf. *ante*, p. 466, note.

The authors whom it remains to notice may, in accordance with the prevailing character of their dramatic productions, be conveniently grouped as tragic and comic dramatists respectively.

Among the former, NATHANIEL LEE[1] (1650–1690) holds a prominent place. Those of his works in which he was associated with Dryden have been already noticed. Gifted with great natural powers of elocution, he sought to make his fortune as an actor, but failed; as a writer for the stage, however, he seems to have been very successful. In the year 1684 the excitable nature of his temperament passed into actual madness, but he subsequently recovered his sanity, and died (it is said) in a drunken fit.

Nathaniel Lee (1650–1690).

The tragedies of Lee discover noble if not rare gifts; his choice of subjects exhibits a soaring delight in magnificent and imposing historic themes, and is in general felicitous as well as ambitious. In execution he displays an impetuosity in which it is easy to discover the traces of incipient insanity; but as one of his critics[2] has observed, there is 'method in his madness' and his 'frenzy is the frenzy of a poet.' In bombast he may almost be said to be without a rival—but a real passion often burns beneath the cloud of words in which it is enveloped. In versification he was a follower of Dryden—whose example prompted him to adopt the use of rhyme, and from 1677 onwards to abandon it.

His characteristics as a tragic dramatist.

Thus his earliest play, the tragedy of *Nero, Emperor of Rome* (acted 1675), is mainly, though not entirely, in rhyme, and his second, *Sophonisba, or Hannibal's Overthrow* (acted 1676), entirely so. Of these the former may be passed by as an unhistorical medley of historical personages; the latter is an equally unenjoyable version of a favourite subject of the English tragic drama[3]. Besides the story of Sophonisbe—treated here with the utmost freedom—Lee has availed himself of the tradition of Hannibal's passion for a Capuan lady; but the love-sick

His Nero, Emperor of Rome (1675).

Sophonisba, or Hannibal's Overthrow (1676).

[1] *The Dramatick Works of Mr. Nathanael Lee.* 3 vols. 1734.

[2] See an Essay on *Lee's Plays* in *The Retrospective Review*, vol. iii. Part ii.

[3] Cf. *ante*, p. 59.

Hannibal of this 'heroic play' is altogether unendurable[1]. 'Praecipitandus est liber Spiritus' is the characteristic motto of this tragedy; but the spirit both of it and of its successor, *Gloriana, or The Court of Augustus Caesar* (acted 1676), likewise in rhyme, is a compound of artificiality and extravagance[2]. In *The Rival Queens, or Alexander the Great* (acted 1677), however, Lee achieved a work which deserves to live. The theme of this tragedy —which is mainly in blank-verse—is the jealousy of Alexander's first wife, the passionate and vindictive Roxana, against his second, the mild and gentle Statira; and this subject[3] must be allowed to be treated not only with great dramatic skill, but with considerable poetic power. That passages in it are not free from bombast, and that the catastrophe, Alexander's death, is treated with a hazardous audacity the results of which only a really great actor could save from toppling over into the ridiculous, is not to be denied; but I think it will be found difficult to read this tragedy without genuine admiration for the fervour and ardour which hurry it along in its impetuous course[4]. Again in blank-verse are the

Gloriana, or The Court of Augustus (1676).

The Rival Queens, or Alexander the Great (1677).

[1] The authorities for this tradition will be found in a note to a historical drama by a living poet, Professor Nichol's *Hannibal* (1873). The merits of this remarkable work have met with so general an acknowledgment that they stand in no need of the passing tribute I take this opportunity of offering to them.—Lee's heroine, who is called Rosalinda (!), is a prisoner in the Roman camp, and appears in boy's clothes at the battle of Zama, where she is killed. (This event is foretold in a witchcraft scene; but the witchcraft is not borrowed from that in Marston's *Sophonisba*.)

[2] The main plot of this tragedy turns on the love of Caesario for Gloriana, Pompey's daughter, whom the jealous passion of Augustus keeps confined! Julia and Ovid are of course introduced.

[3] Probably (I have not seen more than a summary of the romance) founded upon part of Calprenède's *Cassandre*.

[4] Colley Cibber has some pointed remarks on this play. After quoting a 'rhapsody of vain-glory' from it, he observes that 'when these flowing Numbers come from the Mouth of a Betterton, the Multitude no more desired Sense to them, than our musical *Connoisseurs* think it essential in the celebrate Airs of an Italian opera.' (*Apology*, p. 89.)—*The Rival Queens* became so popular that many lines from it have passed into familiar quotations, especially one which is generally misquoted ('When Greeks join'd Greeks, then was the Tug of War.' Act iv).—The equally immortal lines beginning 'See the Conquering Hero comes' (introduced by Handel into his *Judas Maccabeus*) occur in this play.

tragedies of *Mithridates King of Pontus* (acted 1678) and *Theodosius, or The Force of Love* (acted 1680), though the latter has occasional passages in rhyme, such as the striking night-soliloquy of Varanes in v. 2[1]. *Mithridates* is a mere story of love and lust upon a quasi-historical back-ground. In *Caesar Borgia* (acted 1680)—also in blank-verse—the poet could not easily add to the horrors of his theme; and he even deserves our gratitude for having spared us the personal introduction of Pope Alexander VI. But though his plot (the terrible story of the murder of the Duke of Gandia by his brother Caesar) is historical, the same cannot be said of the use made by him of that old bugbear of English theatrical audiences, Macchiavelli, who is the villain proper of the piece[2]. The play is one of the most outrageous attempts of Restoration tragedy to revive the worst horrors of the Elisabethan drama in the days of its crudity and in those of its decay; and the language is frequently as outrageous as the theme—'volleys,' to borrow a phrase from the play, 'of revenge[3].' On *Caesar Borgia* followed in 1681, likewise in blank-verse, the tragedy of *Lucius Junius Brutus, Father of his Country*. This tragedy, which was stopped by authority after the third night of its performance as an 'anti-monarchical' play[4], is stated to be partly founded on Mdlle. de Scudéry's romance of *Clélie*. It is very ambitious in design, beginning with the death of Lucrece and occupied chiefly with Brutus' treatment of his sons, one of whom is married to Teraminta, a natural daughter of Tarquin. This tragedy is devoid neither of bombast nor of pathos[5], but in the speeches of Brutus

Mithridates (1678).

Theodosius, or The Force of Love (1680).

Caesar Borgia (1680).

Lucius Junius Brutus (1681).

[1] The subject of this tragedy is the same as that of Massinger's *The Emperor of the East* (*ante*, p. 277).

[2] He says (act iv):

> 'Well could I curse away a Winter's Night,
> Though standing naked on a Mountain's Top,
> And think it but a Minute spent in Sport.'

[3] The heroine Bellamira is strangled on the stage; the rest of the main characters are poisoned.—Borgia's ravings at the conclusion are in Lee's most developed style.

[4] Dibdin, iv. 187.

[5] See for the latter Titus' speech to Teraminta (act iii *ad fin.*), but even here the beauty of the passage is spoilt.

Constantine the Great (1684).

Lee proves unequal to his task, and shows what an interval there is even in power of execution between Elisabethan and Restoration tragedy. In *Constantine the Great* (acted 1684) we have the same method of treating a quasi-historical subject. Though the tragedy begins with the vision of the Cross, it soon becomes a mere drama of erotic passion, turning on the love of father and son for the same woman[1]. There remain two other plays from the hand of this fertile but hasty author, of very

The Princess of Cleve (1681).

different merit. *The Princess of Cleve* (acted in 1681) is very appropriately described by Lee in the Dedication as 'this Farce, Comedy, Tragedy or mere Play.' Founded on the once famous French romance of the same name by Madame La Fayette, it envelopes a more than hazardous sentimental situation[2] in ribald comedy of almost un-

The Massacre of Paris (1690).

equalled grossness[3]. *The Massacre of Paris* (acted 1690), on the other hand, seems to me one of the best of Lee's plays. It is less disfigured by rant than the generality of them, though this element is by no means altogether absent; and the action is both perspicuous in its management and spirited in its conduct. Moreover, the amorous intrigue is in this instance subsidiary only, and

Lee's extravagance.

heightens, instead of absorbing, the effect of the whole. In general, however, it is impossible to part from this author without pointing out that the extravagance of his diction is even less noteworthy as a typical characteristic of him than the extravagance—in sameness—of his imagination; it might be said of his characters that they are mad even

[1] The *historical* episode here reproduced has some resemblance to the *unhistorical* story of *Don Carlos*, which (as narrated by the Abbé St. Réal) furnished Otway (cf. *infra*) and afterwards Schiller with the plots, or part of the plots, of their tragedies. In Lee's tragedy Arius is represented as a black villain, and in the end thrown into a poisoned bath prepared by him for his victims—a catastrophe not very different from that of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*.

[2] In his *Cours de Litt. Dram.*, vol. iv. sect. lxvii, M. Saint-Marc Girardin has commented on the ethical significance of the main situation of this romance, where a wife avows to her husband her love for another man, in order to claim her husband's protection against herself.

[3] In this play occurs a passage in which the character of Rochester is drawn under the name of Rosidore (i. 2).

before they go mad (as they often do); and none of our later tragic poets has dwelt so persistently on images of lust and wantonness. Lee had some true fire of passion, but he fed the flames with impure oil.

Thomas Otway (1651–1685).

THOMAS OTWAY[1]—'the tender Otway' as he has been not inappropriately called[2]—deserves a more than passing notice in the literary history of the Restoration age. His life reminds us of the brief and broken career of a Marlowe, to whose mightier and manlier genius however that of Otway bears little resemblance. The weakness of his moral nature prevented him from gathering up his wasting strength, and the miseries of his existence, due in part to this moral weakness, immersed him in alternatives of exhausting want and enervating debauchery, till on the mere threshold of manhood he sank into a premature grave. Had it been otherwise, we might have to remember his literary career as more than a series of imperfect attempts which in only one or two cases attained to enduring excellence, and his personal life as something different from what it is,—one of the most pitiful and melancholy pages in English biography.

His life and works.

Of that life it may be exceptionally worth while to connect an outline with such notice as seems necessary of Otway's dramatic works. Born in 1651 at Trotton, near Midhurst, in Sussex, and educated at Winchester and Oxford, Thomas Otway was left penniless by his father's death, and either ran away with a company of players from the University, or directly became enrolled as an actor at one of the London theatres. Unhappily for him, his social as well as literary talents attracted the notice, and obtained for him occasional admission into the society, of the young men of fashion of the Court—above all of Lord Plymouth, one of the King's sons. In the midst of his dissipations he composed his first—and indisputably worst—

[1] *The Works of Thomas Otway. With Notes and Life.* By Thomas Thornton. 3 vols., 1813.—An edition of his *Works* in 2 vols., 1812, contains a sketch of his life, enlarged from that by Johnson in the *Lives of the Poets.*

[2] See Collins' *Ode to Pity.*

His Alcibiades (1675).

tragedy, *Alcibiades* (acted 1675), the plot of which is said to be taken from Cornelius Nepos and Plutarch, but resembles their narratives only as a nightmare resembles the incidents which it chaotically reproduces[1]. In the death of the hero however the dramatist shows what he constantly exhibits in his plays, a sure perception of stage-effect. *Alcibiades* is a not very successful experiment in rhymed verse, and the same form is employed in

Don Carlos (1676).

Otway's second play, the better-known tragedy of *Don Carlos*, produced (in 1676) under the immediate patronage of Rochester, who happened at this time to have grown tired of protecting the efforts of Crowne[2]. The play is however not without real merits. These are not to be sought in the versification, in which here as elsewhere Otway cannot be said to shine. But the subject (borrowed from a French historical novel by St. Réal, the source of the myth upon which the genius of Schiller afterwards stamped a wide popular currency[3]) is excellently chosen. And though towards the close the execution lapses into excess, a multiplicity of incident and an interesting variety of characters are upon the whole

[1] The central figure is Timandra, who is beloved not only by Alcibiades, himself here a model Athenian, but also by Theramenes 'the now Athenian general,' and by Agis King of Sparta. Tissaphernes startles us by presenting himself not as a Persian satrap, but as an old Spartan general.—The plot, which is absurd in the extreme, ends by Elysium opening to receive Timandra, while the Spirits recite verses not devoid of a reminiscence of the Witches in *Macbeth*. On the other hand, the death of Alcibiades must have been dramatically most effective.

[2] *Cf. ante*, p. 461, note 3.

[3] The resemblance between Schiller's and Otway's plays, though doubtless only arising from this community of source, is most striking—not only in many of the characters and situations, but also in some individual scenes. Both dramatists have the character of the Marquis Posa, but Schiller does not, like Otway, introduce Don John of Austria ('Austria,' as Philip most inappropriately calls him). A fine dramatic contrast is obtained by the juxtaposition of the kinsmen. The close of Otway's play, which resembles that of *Hamlet* (there are manifest reminiscences elsewhere of *Othello* and *King Lear*), is furiously tragical; and the King, whom history would not allow the author to kill, does his utmost by (according to the stage-direction) 'Running off Raving Mad.'—It is to be regretted that the play should have been accompanied by an Epilogue containing a ribald reference to a scandal about Dryden.

managed with great skill. To his new-found patron Otway hastened to dedicate his next two plays, mere versions of French originals, the tragedy of *Titus and Berenice* and the farce of *The Cheats of Scapin* (both acted 1677)[1]; whereupon he was in his turn abandoned by the fickle profligate, and afterwards mercilessly ridiculed by him in some of the most disgusting lines of a disgusting lampoon, doubtless written 'with ease' by this worthy leader of a 'mob of gentlemen.'

Titus and Berenice (1677). The Cheats of Scapin (1677).

After producing—manifestly in a cynical mood—his unpleasant comedy of *Friendship in Fashion* (1678), Otway at last succeeded in obtaining, through his earlier patron Lord Plymouth, a cornetcy of horse in the force at that time about to start for Flanders under the Duke of Monmouth. But unfortunately for the unhappy adventurer, the troops of which his regiment formed part were speedily disbanded, their pay was doled out to them in an unsatisfactory and comparatively valueless shape, and Otway was again reduced to poverty and distress. In the Epilogue to his next play, *The History and Fall of Caius Marius* (1680), he refers to his brief and unlucky military career. This tragedy, which is nothing short of a monstrous plagiarism[2], was obviously produced in haste; but it is creditable to the public taste, vitiated as it was and wholly callous to any desecration of the master-pieces of the national drama, that such a demand upon its patience proved too strong.

Friendship in Fashion (1678).

The History and Fall of Caius Marius (1680).

The misery of Otway was enhanced by an unrequited passion for a gifted actress, who had attracted the attention of his former patron Rochester. Mrs. Barry, who impersonated the chief female characters in his tragedies, may perhaps have inspired the poet in their creation. Impure as was the result of his passionate imaginings in the tragedy of *The Orphan, or The Unhappy Marriage* (1680), it yet reveals the power of genuine feeling; and the great popularity to which this play attained is not wholly without justification. Though its subject is one which unfits it for comment, and though the

The Orphan, or The Unhappy Marriage (1680).

[1] From Racine's *Berenice* and Molière's *Les Fourberies de Scapin*.

[2] *viz.* of *Romeo and Juliet*. The details may, for very shame, be omitted.

treatment is unhappily full of pruriency, yet there is very much that is attractive in the character of Monimia, and it was here that Otway for the first time exhibited that touch of true tenderness which lends a lasting charm to passages of his plays[1]. *The Orphan*, like the stolen *Caius Marius*, is in blank-verse. It was followed by the farcical and grossly written comedy of *The Soldier's Fortune* (acted 1681), but this I pass over.

The Soldier's Fortune (1681).

Venice Preserved, or A Plot Discovered (1682).

In *Venice Preserved, or A Plot Discovered* (1682) there is a side-reference, though in truth a not very skilful one, to the partisan manœuvres founded by the Whigs upon the pretended Popish Plot and to the falsehoods by which the 'discovery' had been supported. And the buffoon character of Antonio, whose scenes are a gross blemish upon the tragedy, was, as the Prologue clearly indicates, written to ridicule Shaftesbury, whom Otway had already attacked in his *Caius Marius*. The political animus of the play can only offend, and the gross form it takes must utterly disgust every reader. The subject proper was, as in the case of *Don Carlos*, furnished by the Abbé St. Réal, from whom one of the speeches (that of the conspirator Renault) is stated to be translated *verbatim*. The general interest of the plot is however undeniable, while its scene is most felicitously chosen. As in *Don Carlos* the Spanish Court, even now supposed capable of any deeds of darkness by honest Protestant English hearts[2], had served as a suitable back-ground to a picture of intrigue and murder, so in *Venice Preserved* the scene was appropriately laid in a State whose mysterious life was perhaps more than ever the subject of European wonderment[3]. It is not surprising

[1] See Monimia's speech ('Man therefore was a Lord-like creature made') ii. 1.

[2] See *e. g.* Sir Robert Howard's *The Duke of Lerma* (*ante*, p. 533).

[3] Thus Sismondi in his *History of the Italian Republics* (*Cab. Cycl.* ed., p. 358) observes, with reference to the very conspiracy in question and its suppression, 'The Council of Ten desired, above all, the silence of terror; and the romantic history of this conspiracy, published by St. Réal in 1674, and the tragedy of *Venice Preserved*, by Otway, in 1682, were the only public documents of this catastrophe for a long time.'—The date of the conspiracy is 1618.

that there should be much in Otway's play (particularly in act i) which at once reminds the reader of *Othello*;* but enough of originality remains to allow us to pass by the undoubted fact of these reminiscences. The three chief characters of *Venice Preserved* are drawn with great, though perhaps not with equal, skill and vigour. The settled determination of Pierre contrasts effectively with the weakness of Jaffier, who after joining in the conspiracy is persuaded by Belvidera to save the State by betrayal. He afterwards seeks to atone for his act by sacrificing himself for his friend; and at last stabs both himself and Pierre in Roman fashion, thus depriving the scaffold of its double prey. There is to my mind nothing in the terrors of this scene out of accord with the general conception and character of this gloomy tragedy; but the madness of Belvidera and the apparition of the ghosts of Pierre and Jaffier overburden the mind which has already supped full of horrors. The great and characteristic beauty of *Venice Preserved*, however, consists beyond a doubt in the exquisite tenderness of the love-scenes between Jaffier and Belvidera, which are justly regarded as unparalleled by anything else in our later drama. This tragedy is, like its predecessors, in blank-verse.

The Atheist (1684).

Otway's end.

After *Venice Preserved* Otway produced no other drama, except *The Atheist, or The Second Part of The Soldier's Fortune* (acted 1684)[1]. But neither pathetic tragedies[2] nor coarse comedies—though equally in accordance with the taste of the age,—neither ignoble efforts of political partisanship nor open panegyric (which in his poem of *Windsor Forest* Otway lavished upon the recently deceased Charles II and his successor), could avail him. Debt and distress weighed him down; and in the obscure

[1] It has the coarseness of all Otway's comedies; but there is some humour in the notion of the *père prodigue* in this play. The 'Atheist' himself, I am sorry to say, being asked of what religion he is, replies: 'Of the religion of the Inner-Temple, the common-law religion.' It is refreshing to find him saluted as 'Iniquity,' like a Vice in an old morality.

[2] The copy-right of *Venice Preserved* is said to have been purchased by a bookseller for £15; but I do not suppose that the *copy-right* of many plays at that time would have produced more.

retreat of an ale-house on Tower Hill he ended his unhappy existence on April 15, 1685[1]. From so wretched and ill-regulated a life it would be futile to look for perfect poetic fruit. Yet (his comedies apart) such is the self-educating power of real genius, even where its range is limited, that it is possible to trace in Otway's tragic productions a progress from crude beginnings to achievements not wholly unworthy of his most characteristic gifts. Inspired perhaps by his unhappy passion, he freed himself from the juvenile bombast of his earlier works; and while we may regret his literary sins as well as his personal errors, we have something besides pity to bestow upon the poet who created Monimia and Belvidera.

Progressive developement of his tragic genius.

Among the tragic poets of this age THOMAS SOUTHERNE (1660–1746) should not be passed over, who lived to be the Nestor of English literature in the next, and to be congratulated by Pope on 'his fair account having run (without a blot) to eighty one.' It ran yet four years further, and according to Warton, Southerne who had 'lived the longest, died the richest of our poets.' Of his plays (beginning with the tragedy of *The Loyal Brother*, in which—for it was produced in the stormy times of 1682—he is stated[2] to have complimented James Duke of York) I am only acquainted with three; yet even these suffice to give an idea of his versatility. The earliest of these is the tragedy of *The Fatal Marriage, or The Innocent Adultery* (acted 1694[3]), which is a tragic version of the plot familiar to modern readers from Mr. Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* and other narratives. It is easy to understand how this play, which shows considerable pathetic power, suited the tastes of the age for which Garrick revived it—indeed the sentiment is of a kind which would not

Thomas Southerne (1660–1746).

His The Fatal Marriage, or The Innocent Adultery (1694).

[1] The cause of his death is variously reported; see Johnson's *Life*.

[2] By Dibdin, iv. 340; where see an account of other of his plays.

[3] On its revival in 1757 the comic under-plot was omitted; and the play was afterwards re-named *Isabella*. In this shape I have read the play (as printed, with *The Maid's Last Prayer*, in vol. i. of *The Modern British Drama*). It seems, however, to have continued to 'circulate' under one of its earlier and more fascinating titles in the days of Miss Lydia Languish.

seem out of place on the modern French stage. Yet there is a relic of old Elisabethan intensity in the passages where Isabella momentarily designs to murder her first husband on his return, and where, subsequently, she becomes mad. The lover of parallels might find an example still nearer home helping to explain the popularity which for a long series of years attended the other tragedy by Southerne which I am able to notice—the once famous *Oroonoko* (acted 1696 [1]). It was founded upon a novel of the same name by Mrs. Aphra Behn. Leaving the novel out of the question, the play must be allowed to possess very little merit; its popularity was doubtless the result of the colour of its hero [2]. That it contains occasional fine lines and fine sentiments need not be denied [3]. The form of the play is a mixture of prose and blank-verse.

Oroonoko (1696).

Southerne's comedy of *The Maid's Last Prayer, or Any, rather than Fail* (acted 1693), shows that this author, praised by Dryden for his 'purity,' was almost as successful in following Astraea's style of comedy as in dramatically adapting her praiseworthy lapse into sentiment [4].

The Maid's Last Prayer (1693).

Hardly any other names of note remain to connect the

[1] A long series of representations is mentioned by Geneste, closing with the year 1829.—In my copy (of 1763) a previous enthusiastic possessor has written, 'One of the best Tragedies in the English Language.'

[2] Since the days of Mrs. Behn and Southerne English fiction on and off the stage has become sufficiently familiar with figures like the noble Oroonoko, a Pagan full of all the Christian virtues, who from his native kingdom in Africa has been dragged into slavery on a West-Indian island, and is there, after an unsuccessful attempt at revolt, cruelly put to death.

[3] The passage,

'Do pity me,
Pity's akin to love,'

has passed into a proverb. Anything more 'stagey' than the way in which the high-souled negro consents to be called Caesar, and similar passages, it would be difficult to imagine. And the play ends (or all but ends) with a sentiment on the part of Oroonoko almost sublime in its absurdity:

'*Stan.* He has kill'd the Governor and stabb'd himself.
Oroon. 'Tis as it should be now; I have sent his Ghost
To be a Witness of that Happiness
In the next World, which he denied us here.'

[4] There is however considerable humour in the diction (or twaddle) of Lord Malepert and in that of his aunt, the unfortunate heroine of this comedy. Sir Symphony's music meeting—where practical jokes are played as well as music—is equally illustrative of the tastes and of the manners of the age.

George Granville, Lord Lansdowne (1667 *circ.*–1735).

tragic drama of the Restoration and Revolution with that of the 'Augustan' age. Such a link may however be found in GEORGE GRANVILLE (from 1711) LORD LANSDOWNE[1] (1667 *circ.*–1735), the patron of Pope's early efforts—'Granville the polite,' who also, to his credit be it said, might be remembered as Granville the modest. Besides some harmless love-poetry which does not concern us here[2], and two not inelegant contributions to the operatic drama[3], Granville produced, in 1698, a tragedy, *Heroick Love, or The Cruel Separation*, to which Prologues were written by two men respectively representative of two different ages—Dryden and Henry St. John (afterwards Lord Bolingbroke). This play, though written in blank-verse, may be regarded as a signal example of 'heroic' tragedy, on account of its tendency to make the whole action turn on the one passion of love—the 'universal passion' truly of the tragic dramatists of this period. We here obtain a definition of 'True Love, Heroic Love,' as that which sacrifices itself for the beloved object; and the heroine 'Chruseis' is described as

His Heroic Love (1698).

> 'the brightest Pattern of Heroic Love
> And perfect Virtue, that the World e'er knew[4].'

For the rest, the story of Chryseis and Briseis is treated by Granville with some ingenuity, and with a degree of sentimental pathos of which Homer was certainly innocent; but though this tragedy is not altogether without merit—the passion of Chryseis is touching, while on the other hand the craft of Ulysses in arousing her jealousy is not very profound—the love-sick King Agamemnon is almost a caricature rather than a type, and cannot be said to be what he calls 'a gainer' by the exchange of his Homeric for 'heroic' features.

[1] *The Genuine Works in Verse and Prose of the Right Hon. George Granville, Lord Lansdowne.* 3 vols., 1736.

[2] In *The British Enchanters* (iii. 3) 'a Captive Lover' invokes the fictitious name of the lady to whom the author's erotics were addressed by a song beginning,

> 'The happiest Mortals once were we;
> I lov'd Mira, Mira me.'

[3] Cf. as to one of these, *ante*, p. 481.

[4] See the speech of Chruseis, iii. 2, and that of Ulysses, v. 2.

As a writer of comedy, Granville cannot be said to shine[1].

By the side of Pope's early patron may be mentioned a writer whom in his earliest poems of any importance Pope sought to outshine, and another whose name—for a different reason—will never perish so long as that of Pope himself continues to live. As a dramatist AMBROSE PHILIPS (1671–1749) is however only known for his version of the *Andromaque* of Racine under the characteristically sentimental title of *The Distrest Mother* (1711[2]), to the reading of which Mr. Spectator was taken by Will Honeycomb[3]. Ambrose Philips (1671–1749).

The redoubtable JOHN DENNIS[4] (1657–1733), who as a critic by no means deserves the contempt heaped on him by Pope, endeavoured to help to arrest that 'declension of Poetry' which he deplored as the antecedent of that of 'Liberty of Empire[5],' by a series of works more or less original. Beginning with a comedy judiciously mingling patriotism and party-spirit, *A Plot and No Plot, or Jacobite Credulity* (1697), which met with little success[6], he John Dennis (1657–1733).

[1] His *Once a Lover and Always a Lover* (1736) appears from the Preface to be a revised version of a juvenile piece, *The She-Gallants* (1696). This comedy is in Congreve's style, and has something of the gaiety as well as of the impropriety of the great master. Granville is however unequal to the vigorous drawing of character—Sir Toby Tickle, in whom (as the Preface shows) the author took pride as at once decent and typical of the spirit of libertine gaiety surviving in an old man, is really colourless. The comedy of *The Jew of Venice*, a version of Shakspere's *Merchant* anything but creditable to Granville, has been already referred to, vol. i. p. 288.—The tragedies of another of Pope's patrons, as conspicuous for vanity as Granville is for modesty, John Sheffield Duke of Buckinghamshire—which were likewise mere adaptations for the worse of Shakspere, and have been noticed as such, vol. i. p. 289—fall in date a little outside the range of the present chapter.

[2] Printed in vol. i. of *The Modern British Drama.*

[3] See *The Spectator*, No. 290. Steele wrote a Prologue for this play.

[4] *The Select Works of John Dennis.* 2 vols., 1718. As I am only acquainted with those of Dennis' works included in this collection, I have mentioned no others in the text. The article on *John Dennis's Works* in *The Retrospective Review*, vol. i. part ii, confines itself to a notice of his labours as a critic, and of his alteration of *Coriolanus.*

[5] See his *Essay on the Opera*, cited *ante*, p. 480, note 1.

[6] Bull senior and Bull junior (his son, just arrived from France) are the chief characters in this play. It was followed (in 1699) by *Rinaldo and Armida* (a tragedy from Tasso).

produced as his first original tragedy, in 1700, *Iphigenia*. Though the Prologue to this play introduces the Genius of England, with a patriotic protest against the sway of Opera, the play itself was damned—a fate which was perhaps too severe for so commonplace a composition. There is nothing absurd in it; but the description of the madness of Orestes is quite inadequate. In 1704 followed the tragedy of *Liberty Asserted*, which was successful, doubtless by dint of its direct appeal to national animosity and pride, the subject being the war of the French and the Hurons against the Iroquois assisted by the English. But Dennis achieved a more enduring remembrance for his tragedy of *Appius and Virginia* (1709), failure though it proved. This immortality it owes to a line by Pope [1], and to the anecdote connected with the withdrawal of the play which has given rise to the now proverbial phrase of 'stolen thunder.' *Appius and Virginia* is not ill described by its author by two epithets upon the whole applicable to Dennis himself, as 'this rough manly play.'

Other tragic dramatists.

Of less notorious victims of Pope's satire, the Whig party-historian JOHN OLDMIXON (1673-1724) and the critic CHARLES GILDON (1665–1724) also produced or adapted plays of a serious cast [2]. EDWARD RAVENSCROFT, though chiefly active as a comic dramatist, has left behind him at least one apparently original tragedy [3]. JOHN HUGHES

[1] See *Essay on Criticism*, v. 584. The story of Dennis' indignant exclamation on finding the thunder which had been set free by the withdrawal of *Appius and Virginia* and which the manager thought too good to be lost, employed in *Macbeth*, is told by Dibdin, iv. 357. Dennis is the 'Sir Tremendous' of Pope, Arbuthnot, and Gay's wretched farce *Three Hours after Marriage* (1717)—the origin of Pope's quarrel with Colley Cibber, and the final cause of the substitution of the latter for Theobald as the hero of *The Dunciad*. See Cibber's *Apology*.—Besides the plays mentioned, and the adaptation of *The Merry Wives* noted vol. i. p. 289, Dennis appears to have produced a comedy, *Gibraltar* (damned in 1705), and a mask, *Orpheus and Euridice* (1709).

[2] Cf. vol. i. p. 288.

[3] *The Italian Husband* (1698), as to which there is little worth noting except the circumstance—dilated on in the *Praelude*—that the play has only three acts. The plot is a simple one—of adultery and revenge. The situation at the beginning of act ii. has a certain resemblance to the famous scene (v. 1) in Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*. The *dénouement* is conceived with a strong sense

(1677–1720), who assisted Addison in *Cato*, and who afterwards wrote *The Siege of Damascus*[1], and AARON HILL (1685–1750), the first of whose many tragedies, *Elfrid, or The Fair Inconstant*, was acted in 1710[2], were authors partly belonging to this period; and among female authors besides MRS. APHRA BEHN and MRS. MANLEY (died 1724), whose scandalous prose-fiction has made her name notorious, MRS. PIX (who also wrote comedies) and the learned MRS. COCKBURN, better known under her maiden name of TROTTER (1679–1749), were likewise active in it as tragic dramatists[3].

But it is pleasant to be able to conclude a sketch of the history of English tragedy in this age with the names of two authors of different eminence indeed, but both to be remembered with respect as dramatists, while one of them is to be held in honour among the chief ornaments of our eighteenth-century literature.

Nicholas Rowe (1673–1718).

The majority of the tragedies of NICHOLAS ROWE[4] (1673–1718; poet-laureate and—such were the cumulative

of horrible realistic effect; and brief as it is, the tragedy may be regarded as an example of a theatrically striking piece in which there is no trace of an attempt at character—hardly even at style.—Ravenscroft, who adapted *Titus Andronicus* (1687) and translated *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1672), attacked Dryden in the Prologue; Dryden retorted in the Prologue to *The Assignation;* and Ravenscroft replied in that to his comedy of *The Careless Lovers* (1673). See Scott's *Dryden*, iv. 345.

[1] The plot of this finely-written play (printed in *The Modern British Drama*, vol. i, was suggested by Sir Wm. D'Avenant's *The Siege* (cf. *ante*, p. 486); but Hughes' version ends tragically.

[2] For a description of it see Geneste, ii. 432.

[3] Of the tragedies of Blackmore and Rymer, and of some of the principal writers of comedy, mention has been made, or will be made, elsewhere.

[4] *The Works of Nicholas Rowe, Esq.* Third Edition. 3 vols., 1733. This edition also contains his single comedy *The Biter* (1704), which is quite worthless. Its scene is laid among the 'humours' of Croydon fair; its chief characters are caricatures of an East India merchant, an old widow in search of a new husband, and a 'biter' or amateur of jokes, practical and otherwise.—Rowe is also known as the translator of the most rhetorical of the greater Roman poets, *Lucan*, and of Boileau's *Le Lutrin*. His original poem, *On the late Glorious Successes of Her Majesty's Arms*, may be mentioned in illustration of the enthusiastic loyalty which also appears in the tag to his tragedy of *The Royal Convert*, and elsewhere. Personally, though a successful poet and an accomplished scholar, he was evidently distinguished by a modesty commendable in so prosperous a man.

honours of literature in his days—one of the Land Surveyors of the Customs in London and Presentations Secretary to the Lord Chancellor) differ in one important respect only, but that a very important one, from those of his most popular predecessors. In dramatic power, as exhibiting itself in characterisation, he cannot be said to have excelled. Of a genuinely poetic touch he shows few signs. These plays are still occupied almost entirely with themes of 'heroic love;' all is made to turn on this pivot, whatever other passions may be nominally brought into play. In the invention of situations exciting terror or pity Rowe is fertile and skilful; he is fond of night-scenes, and of all the outward machinery of awe and gloom. But he rarely displays any natural force even in his most effective moments, and is wanting in passion or in elevation where his theme seems to demand the one or the other. His most distinctive and most praiseworthy feature is the greater degree of refinement to which in expression if not in sentiment he has attained. Rowe is indeed far from being an English Racine; his style is too tame to merit the praise of dignity; but he shows a desire for decency, and is at all events never gross.

His qualities as a tragic dramatist.

These characteristics will be found to recur with little variation in Rowe's five earlier plays, all of which, as well as the remaining two, are in blank-verse, though 'the ends of acts'—and occasionally of scenes or speeches—'still jingle into rhyme[1].' They may therefore be for the most part rapidly enumerated. *The Ambitious Step-Mother* (1700) is a tragedy with one of those Oriental palace-intrigues so much affected by heroic tragedy. The right to the throne of the elder brother is plotted against by the mother of the younger—Artemisa, who, considering the number of deaths occasioned by her policy, is fortunate in being herself left alive at the close. The plot of this play is as good of its kind as anything in Rowe; and in the self-sacrificing death of Cleone (iv. 3) there is a touch of pathos. *Tamerlane* (1702), the play upon which its author

His The Ambitious Step-Mother (1700).

Tamerlane (1702).

[1] Prologue to *Jane Shore*.

is said to have 'valued himself most,' is chiefly noticeable as treating the same theme as that which had once been so familiar to Elisabethan audiences. But Marlowe would have in truth been astonished at this Tamerlane! In the place of the robust hero with the 'high astounding terms' of the old tragedy we have here a calm, tolerant, nay philosophic prince, who discusses the common merits of varying forms of religion in the tone of Nathan the Wise, and is with difficulty moved from his temperate calm by the severest trials. Rowe, as he informs us, designed in this piece to draw two parallels—one between Tamerlane and William the Deliverer, the other between Bajazet and Lewis XIV! The latter endeavour resulted in a most extraordinary caricature; for Bajazet, who is a prisoner all through the play and who under the circumstances of his position behaves like a madman, is a parallel to none but himself[1]. The plot is altogether without dramatic probability; everything as usual resolves itself into a love-story; but even here the poet fails to rise to the height of his own situations; his efforts indeed are perceptible, but to borrow a phrase which he appears to affect, 'it wo' not be.' The next of Rowe's tragedies is also the most celebrated among them. But in my opinion *The Fair Penitent* (1703) is devoid of any special merit except such as attaches to the ghastly device of the first scene of act v, where the unhappy heroine is discovered 'in a room hung with Black; on one side Lothario' (her seducer's) 'Body on a Bier[2]; on the other, a Table, with a Skull and other Bones, a Book and a Lamp on it.' It would be an error to suppose that this play, the idea of which is borrowed from Massinger and Field's *The Fatal Dowry*[3], shows any sustained endeavour to trace the purifying power of penitence, or to rival the tender pathos of such an Elisabethan tragedy as Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*[4]. Till she is brought

The Fair Penitent (1703).

[1] Fielding in a note to his *Tom Thumb* (ii. 1) very cleverly contrives at once to twit Rowe with the bombast of his Bajazet, and to compliment him on the general (comparative) moderation of his tragic diction.

[2] 'Is this that haughty, gallant, gay Lothario?'

[3] *Ante*, p. 279.

[4] *Ante*, p. 113.

face to face with her doom, the unhappy Calista fails to excite our sympathy [1], although 'the false Lothario' may excite our loathing. Nor is the plot managed with much skill—the turning-points being the dropping of a letter and an overhearing; on the other hand, there may have been some attraction in the novelty of a purely domestic theme, and in the concentration of the action upon an even smaller number of persons than is usual in Rowe's plays. *Ulysses* (1705) may be coupled with Granville's *Heroic Love*[2] as a 'heroic' version of Homer. The main course of the plot is this: Eurymachus King of Samos loves Penelope; Telemachus secretly marries Semanthe daughter of Eurymachus; on his father discovering himself, Telemachus kills Eurymachus; the Samians and Ithacans rise against Ulysses; and Semanthe, by falsely accusing another of Penelope's suitors (Antinous) of her father's death, saves Ulysses and Telemachus from the wrath of their adversaries. Neither Ulysses himself, nor any of the other characters, is in the slightest degree interesting; and an utterly commonplace action has thus with perverse ingenuity been foisted into the climax of the Homeric epos [3]. Even so, however, the familiar names lend a certain degree of interest to this production, as compared with *The Royal Convert* (1707), where we are introduced to Hengist the son of Hengist, his brother Aribert, the Christian maiden Ethelinda, the jealous Rodogune, and other Early English unrealities. The story is again one of fraternal rivalry in love; Hengist being enamoured of his brother's secret wife, whom the jealousy of Rodogune brings (on the stage) to the rack. In the scene (v. 2), however, where the Christian Ethelinda discourses to her Aribert—about to suffer death with her—on the consolations of the Christian faith, there is an elevation of sentiment to which Rowe rarely attains, and

Ulysses 1705).

The Royal Convert 1707).

[1] How poor is her soliloquy (iii. 1), where instead of awakening sympathy by dwelling on her own misery, she enters into a general exposition of women's wrongs. In iv. 1, where the fatal discovery finally takes place, Rowe can find nothing more effective for Calista to exclaim than,

'Distraction! Fury! Sorrow! Shame! and Death!'

[2] *Ante*, p. 554.

[3] Minerva appears as a *dea ex machinâ* rather early in the play (iii. 1).

which makes this passage superior to what is to be found in most of the plays in our literature treating the subject of Christian martyrdom.

Jane Shore (1714) and Lady Jane Grey (1715).

In Rowe's last two plays, *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714) and *The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray* (1715), the latter of which properly falls outside the range of this chapter[1], he sought, to some extent at least, to follow a model whom he had done much as an editor to bring into honour. Of Rowe's edition—the earliest octavo edition—of Shakspere mention has been made elsewhere[2], and the credit due to him for setting so useful, though imperfect, an example is among his best titles to remembrance. That as a critic of Shakspere he should still be beset by the prejudices and hasty generalisations of his age was a matter of course. In the Prologue to his earliest play the wholly unwarranted assertion is made that Shakspere excelled in male characters only[3]; and, though it was precisely in female characterisation that Rowe in his latest plays still strove to shine, he now professed to write in the style of an author whose merits he, with more warmth than completeness of judgment, commended to the public[4]. It must however be observed that he did not go far in the direction which he had thus determined to adopt. In

[1] It was produced early in the reign of George I. to whom and whose family play and Epilogue contain pointed—not to say forced—allusions. In her dying moments Lady Jane Grey beseeches Heaven to send 'in Its due season the Hero who may save Its Altars from the Rage of Rome,' and adds a prayer that the Protestant succession may be kept up by a son with virtues equal to his father's. The Epilogue, with still greater ingenuity, compares the self-sacrifice of the future Queen Caroline in 'adopting our Britain' to that of Queen Jane in dying for it.

[2] Vol. i. p. 294.

[3] 'Shakespear, whose Genius, to itself a Law,
Could Men in every Height of Nature draw,
And copied all but Women that he saw.'
Prologue to *The Ambitious Step-Mother*.
This reads like a perversion of Dryden's dictum that 'Shakespeare writ better betwixt man and man; Fletcher betwixt man and woman: consequently the one described friendship better, the other love: yet Shakespeare taught Fletcher to write love; and Juliet and Desdemona are originals.' (*The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy.*)

[4] See the Prologue to *Jane Shore*, which, on the title-page, professes to be 'written in Imitation of Shakespear's Style.'

outward form there is no essential difference between these two and the earlier tragedies of Rowe, though the dialogue has more life (irrespectively of the intermixture of a few 'by my halidomes' and 'by the Roods'). The subjects of these plays are however happily chosen, and treated with natural dignity as well as with genuine feeling: so that in spirit if not in form Rowe certainly approaches Shakspere more nearly in them than in his other works. *Jane Shore*, though on the same theme and in part adopting the same treatment as Thomas Heywood's play[1], was apparently written in ignorance of it; *Lady Jane Gray* owed something—but according to the author, very little—to some rough beginnings of a play on the same subject by a contemporary dramatist named Edmund Smith[2]. The tone of Rowe's tragedy is unequivocally Protestant; but there is a wholesome breath of patriotic feeling in both this tragedy and its predecessor; while the pathetic scenes are, especially in *Jane Shore*, of a very effective nature[3]. Both plays are therefore to be regarded as meritorious efforts in an entirely legitimate direction of a hand by this time well trained in dramatic composition.

Lady Jane Grey, reading Plato's *Phaedon* before the news of her downfall comes upon her, irresistibly recalls the hero of the last tragedy to which I have to refer in this chapter. But *Cato*, the only dramatic work of its author worthy of remembrance[4], is far from representing a parti-

[1] *Ante*, p. 109. Rowe's tragedy would appear to have caused the reprinting, in the year 1717, of the song of *Jane Shore's Ghost*, to the tune of *Live with me*. (See Halliwell's *Notices of Popular Histories*, p. 38, in *Percy Soc. Publ.*, vol. xxiii.)

[2] A previous tragedy, *The Innocent Usurper*, by John Banks (1694) treated the same subject.

[3] *Jane Shore* was accordingly frequently acted in the past and in the present century; and supplied a character to Mrs. Siddons.

[4] His opera of *Rosamond* (1707) has been incidentally mentioned *ante*, p. 481, note; his farce of *The Drummer, or The Haunted House* (1716) is almost equally frigid and (although Steele wrote that to mention its failure was to 'say a much harder thing of the stage than of the comedy') undeniably feeble. The character of Vellum in this play was stated by Addison to have been taken from that of the steward Savil in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornful Lady* (*ante*, p. 187).

cipation by him in Rowe's efforts to return to life and nature by seeking to imitate the greatest master of the national drama. JOSEPH ADDISON (1672–1719) has left a name which dignifies the party and the age to which he belonged by achievements of a more enduring if less sudden fame than either *The Campaign* or the tragedy of which it is alone here necessary to speak. *Cato* was not originally designed for the stage. Addison had first thought of the subject before he left Oxford, had written the greater part on his travels, and had kept the play in an unfinished state among his papers for seven years. He affirms that it was only by the persuasion of his friends that he was induced to let it try its fortune upon the stage, where (furnished with a Prologue by Pope and an Epilogue by Garth) it made its first appearance on April 14, 1713[1].

Joseph Addison (1672–1719).

His Cato.

The time at which *Cato* was thus produced was a season of the utmost political excitement, and in truth a critical period in our history. Only eleven days before—on April 3—the news of the definitive conclusion of the Treaty of Utrecht had reached London. For the Tories this signified the crowning of their peace-policy as an accomplished fact; for the Whigs the abandonment of all, or nearly all, the fruits of the glorious efforts of their great chief Marlborough on so many battle-fields. What Addison had designed as an endeavour to bring English tragedy into accordance with the purity of Classical models, was seized upon by his friends as an expedient which should surpass in its effectiveness Sacheverell's Tory sermon. It was hoped, as Macaulay expresses it[2], that 'the public would discover some analogy between the followers of Caesar and the Tories, between Sempronius and the apostate Whigs, and between Cato, struggling to the last for the liberties of Rome, and the band of patriots who still stood firm round Halifax and Wharton.' The Tories were shrewd enough to adopt a contrary course to that which their adversaries had followed in the case of

Circumstances of its production (April 14, 1713).

[1] Not 1712, as stated by Colley Cibber in his *Apology*.

[2] Essay on *The Life and Writings of Addison*.

Sacheverell[1]; the theatre was accordingly filled with the adherents of either party, equally determined to interpret the play as a compliment to themselves and their leaders. 'The numerous and violent party-claps,' Pope wrote to his patron Sir William Trumbull, 'of the Whig party on the one side of the house were echoed back by the Tories on the other . . and . . after all the applauses of the opposite faction, Lord Bolingbroke sent for Booth, who played Cato, into his box, and presented him with fifty guineas in acknowledgment (as he expressed it) for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator[2].' The play ran during an entire month, and afterwards enjoyed a supplementary triumph at Oxford[3]. The criticisms of Dennis failed to destroy the popularity of the play; which was performed at intervals down into the present century.

Its characteristics as a drama.

When we view this famous tragedy as it now lies dead and cold before us, and examine it, as we needs must, on its own merits, there remains indeed little to account for its unprecedented success. *Cato* is full of effective commonplaces, many of which are to this day current as familiar quotations; but otherwise it would be difficult to find in it any distinguishing feature. Voltaire extolled it as the first English *tragédie raisonnable, i.e.* as the first in which the Rules had been observed with perfect obedience to them as based upon reason[4]; but Dennis had some ground for his remark, that by observing the Unity of Place the author had only contrived to render the action impossible. For, in order to accommodate his incidents to the Rules, Addison had to exclude much that was essential to the

[1] In a contemporary letter (quoted in Macknight's *Life of Bolingbroke*, p. 330, note) the Whigs are said to have expected from *Cato* an effect equal to that of Sacheverell's sermon and trial.

[2] In allusion to the efforts, at one time actually made by Marlborough, to obtain a patent as Captain-General *for life*.

[3] For an account of this see Cibber's *Apology*. Addison generously gave all the profits of the play to the managers.

[4] Gottsched, the chief of the French school in Germany, composed *Der Sterbende Cato* (1732), in which he availed himself of the works of Addison and Deschamps. Gödeke, *Grundriss*, i. 542.

action, while he included much that is not only non-essential but disturbing. It would be difficult to mention a play in which the amatory episodes are more decidedly tedious and intrusive. Not less than six lovers appear in the piece, and at the close, as Schlegel points out, Cato has before dying to arrange a couple of marriages, like a good father in a comedy. Moreover, Cato himself has (with these exceptions) nothing to do; and where an original feature is introduced, it is introduced infelicitously,—as where Cato expresses an apprehension that he has been too hasty in killing himself—a doubt little in accordance with a type of Stoic philosophy. Lord Macaulay, who defends even *Cato* because it was written by Addison, can only say for it that it 'contains excellent dialogue and declamation, and that among plays fashioned on the French model, must be allowed to rank high.' But even to this praise exceptions might be taken. The language, as in everything that came from Addison's pen, is pure and simple; but where is the grandeur of *Cinna*, and where the current of declamation which flows through even the inferior plays of Racine? And if excellent dialogue means lifelike interchange of speech—where is it to be found in *Cato?* Its popularity was due in part to purely adventitious causes, in part to the esteem in which its author was held and to the literary pre-eminence which he had already reached, in part, but in the least part, to its merits of purity of style and nobility of sentiment. Such as it was, *Cato* helped to make English tragedy pursue more consistently than before the path into which it had declined. We had now, it was thought, proved that we too could produce master-pieces in the Classical style; and a return to the traditions of the Elisabethan drama, however much the undeniable effectiveness of its creations might commend it to continued favour on the stage, seemed out of the question for our literature. And it is thus that the play which Addison had written and which Voltaire eulogised marks with incontestable definiteness an epoch in the history of English tragedy—an epoch of decay, upon which no recovery has followed.

Comedy.

Sir George Etherege (1636 *circ.*–1694 *circ.*).

Among the earlier comic dramatists of the Restoration period a greater degree of attention than he appears to me to merit has been bestowed upon SIR GEORGE ETHEREGE[1] (1636 *circ.*–1694 *circ.*). For any one unacquainted with the manners of the period which his comedies reflect, they may be worth reading; but those who have previously resorted to other authors for the same purpose are likely to find these plays extremely wearisome. Colley Cibber's fine gentlemen and fops have been described[2] as 'well-finished copies from the paintings of Etherege;' in my opinion the copies are, not in elaboration only, but altogether, superior to their originals. Appealing as he did to the worst tastes of his own age, there is no reason why Etherege should be treated with more regard than he deserves by posterity. *The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub* (1664), with an impudent French valet as its chief comic character and a purely farcical situation as its chief comic incident, is only worth noting for its grotesque mixture of heroic couplets and prose. *She Wou'd, if She Cou'd* (1668) is throughout in prose, but exhibits no advance of any other description upon its predecessor. The picture of life it presents is that of a breathless succession of passages of intrigues, differing little if at all from one another; and the characters, like the scenes, are mere permutations of a familiar row of figures[3]. In *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676) we seem to have a more elaborate attempt at character in the hero, 'the freshest Fool in town;' but (to borrow a phrase from Dryden's excellent Epilogue) 'there goes more to a substantial ass' than a mere caricature of manners such as this. Sir Fopling, however, may perhaps deserve remembrance as one of the eldest of the

His The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub (1664).

She Would, if She Could (1668).

The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter (1676).

[1] *The Works of Sir George Etherege. Containing his Plays and Poems.* 1735. In this edition the prose is, after the most absurd fashion, printed like blank-verse.

[2] Dibdin, iv. 119.

[3] The following passage in this play (ii. 1) fairly describes the kind of life Etherege's heroes lead, and the atmosphere in which the action of his comedies moves: 'Truly, you seem to be Men of great Employment, that are every Moment rattling from the Eating-Houses to the Play-houses, from the Play-houses to the Mulberry-Garden, that live in a perpetual hurry.'

long family of would-be-Parisian English fops owned by our comic stage[1]. These are the only three plays left behind him by Etherege.

Sir Charles Sedley (1639 *circ.*–1728 *circ.*).

Even more signally honoured by his contemporaries—and perhaps with better reason, though little remains of him to warrant their praises—was SIR CHARLES SEDLEY[2] (1639 *circ.*–1728 *circ.*[3]). King Charles II, whose notice he attracted soon after the Restoration, told him that 'Nature had given him a patent to be Apollo's viceroy.' Buckingham spoke of his 'witchcraft;' Shadwell testified to the extraordinary wit of his conversation as well as to his literary merits; but Rochester perhaps offered the most flattering testimonial, in attributing to Sedley

> 'that prevailing, gentle art
> That can with a resistless charm impart
> The loosest wishes to the chastest heart.'

About his lyrics there is in truth nothing remarkable except occasional turns in the diction of a very felicitous and engaging simplicity,—a feature I have not observed in his dramas. Of these the comedies cannot be said to support his reputation as a wit; the only one which shows any signs in this direction is *Bellamira*. His tragedies may be passed by in a note[4]; and altogether Sedley is little worthy

[1] Here is a specimen:

'*Sir Fopling*. Writing, Madam, is a mechanic part of wit. A Gentleman should never go beyond a Song or a Billet.

Harriet. Bussié was a Gentleman.

Sir Fopling. Who, D'Ambois?

Medley. Was there ever such a brisk Blockhead?

Harriet. Not D'Ambois, Sir, but Rabutin. He who writ the Loves of France.

Sir Fopling. That may be, Madam: many Gentlemen do things that are below 'em.' (iv. 1.)

Fopling is mentioned with other characters by 'gentle George' as 'charming the pit' in Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe*. Dryden's delightful *Letter to Sir George Etherege* (which proves that Dryden, had he not disdained, would have excelled in Butler's and Swift's metre as he excelled in his own) is likewise highly complimentary to his friend's comic wit. In his lines to Congreve, Dryden briefly extols the 'courtship' of Etherege.

[2] *The Works of Sir Charles Sedley in Prose and Verse*. With [extremely brief] Memoirs of the Author's Life. 2 vols., 1778.

[3] According to the *Biographia Dramatica*, on August 20, 1701.

[4] In Shadwell's opinion the earlier of these, *Antony and Cleopatra* (1677),

of notice as a dramatist, though significant as a representative of his age by the frank cheerfulness of his immorality. He seems however to have enjoyed the esteem of the literary world of his times as well as of the world of Court and Fashion; and he will live as the Lisideius of Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, even though he may be forgotten as an author of works of his own.

His The Mulberry Garden (1668).

Bellamira, or The Mistress (1687).

The Grumbler (pr. 1702).

Among Sedley's comedies *The Mulberry Garden* (1668), which is partly founded on Molière's *L'École des Maris*, and is supposed to play just before the Restoration, seems to me utterly worthless. *Bellamira, or The Mistress* (1687), founded on the *Eunuchus* of Terence, is Sedley's loosest, but also from a literary point of view his best, comedy [1]. *The Grumbler* (printed 1702) is evidently a mere translation from the French. The character of Grichard is all but devoid of humour, and far from approaching to the immortal Croaker of Goldsmith's *The Good-natured Man* [2].

John Lacy (d. 1681), actor and dramatist.

A word of notice may likewise be given to the comedies which remain to us from the hand of JOHN LACY [3] (died 1681), though it was as an actor rather than as an

was 'the only Tragedy (except two of Jonson's and one of Shakespear's) wherein Romans are made to speak and do like Romans.' (See Dedication to *A True Widow*.) Nothing more frigid and feeble than this 'heroic tragedy' (in rhymed couplets) could well be imagined; it is as unworthy of comparison with Dryden's as with Shakspere's play on the subject. The action, which as to *extent* is conducted on the same plan as Dryden's (cf. *ante*, p. 515), is managed without skill; and Antony takes a most unconscionable time dying (in two scenes). The length to which the catastrophe is carried was probably the reason for the title under which the play appears to have been reprinted in 1702—*Beauty the Conqueror, or The Death of Mark Antony*. Sedley's other tragedy, *The Tyrant King of Crete* (1702), is an alteration of Henry Killigrew's, *The Conspiracy* (printed 1638), or more probably of its revised edition, *Pallantus and Eudora* (printed 1653). Cf. Geneste, x. 150. It is in blank-verse; but the blank-verse, at least as printed in the above edition of Sedley's *Works*, only at times scans.

[1] The '*faux ménage*' of Bellamira, notwithstanding the grossness of the action, may perhaps be regarded as a not unwholesome satire. Geneste (i. 455) thinks the character of Bellamira to have pointed at the Duchess of Cleveland.

[2] Goldsmith adapted *The Grumbler* as a farce for Quick's benefit in 1773. (*Biographia Dramatica*.)

[3] *The Dramatic Works of John Lacy, Comedian*. With Prefatory Memoir and Notes. (By James Maidment and W. H. Logan.) 1875.

author that he acquired his chief celebrity. He appears to have begun his London life in 1631 by apprenticing himself to Ogilby (then a dancing-master, and in his old age joint author with Shirley of translations from the classics[1], and cosmographer to King Charles II). During the Civil War, Lacy held a commission in the Royal army and gained the experience he afterwards turned to account for his extremely realistic comedy of *The Old Troop*. After the Restoration he returned to the stage, where he became an established favourite. He died in 1681.

Lacy's comedies—both those which are adaptations and those which are so far as we know original, possess a certain interest as showing what kind of entertainment so experienced a comedian thought most likely to suit the tastes of the public for whom he catered. While he delighted the King and Court by his performances, and was in at least one signal instance equally successful as a tutor of his art (Nell Gwynn is said to have owed to him her first instruction as an actress), he consulted in the style and general character of his productions the tastes not only of the exalted personages to whom some of his plays are dedicated, but of his 'friends of th' upper region[2]' in the playhouse. In other words, he is uniformly and unblushingly coarse, and whatever he has of wit is lost in his grossness. *The Dumb Lady, or The Farrier made Physician* (1669) is concocted out of Molière's *Le Médecin malgré lui* and the same author's *L'Amour Médecin; Sauny the Scot, or The Taming of the Shrew* (1667) is a less endurable adaptation of Shakspere, whose Grumio Lacy has converted into a Scotch —or would-be Scotch—serving-man, and the close of whose comedy he has 'strengthened' by an incident probably suggested by the last scene of Fletcher's *The Tamer Tamed*[3].

His adaptations.

[1] Cf. *ante*, p. 310.

[2] See the rather happy Prologue to *The Old Troop*, which appeals to the 'gods' as against the critics in 'box and pit.' Let the latter deal with 'their match, their Dryden wit,' the present poet is 'for the censure' of different judges:

'Let wits and poets keep their proper stations;
He writes to th' terms, I to the long vacations.'

[3] Cf. *ante*, p. 212, note; and vol. i. p. 289.

His The Old Troop, or Monsieur Raggou (1665).

In *The Old Troop, or Monsieur Raggou* (1665), of which I see no reason to follow Langbaine in suspecting the originality, Lacy is altogether on native ground, and paints (or daubs) a picture probably not wholly unlike an aspect of life during the Civil Wars which he had had good opportunities of studying. The humours of a troop of Royalist soldiers, with its Plunder-Master-General, its French cook Monsieur Raggou[1], and its other appendages, are contrasted with the terrors of the country folk (raised to their climax by the threat of cannibalistic requisitions) and with the organised hypocrisy of a Roundhead garrison. The whole furnishes a sufficient illustration of the fact adverted to above[2], that in Charles II's reign the nation had grown sick of soldiers and soldiering, so that the public was willing to applaud even a very unflattering sketch of the art of war.

Sir Hercules Buffoon, or The Poetical Squire (1684).

Sir Hercules Buffoon, or The Poetical Squire (printed 1684) is Lacy's most ambitious effort; for the chief personage is something like an attempt at an original character—that of an insolent lying braggart, with an egregious fool of a more ordinary type for his son. But though not altogether devoid of wit[3], the comic parts of the play are only relatively meritorious, while the serious action exhibits very little of either power or pathos. (In this a wicked uncle tries to defraud his nieces—the guilelessness of one of whom is emphasised by her talking Yorkshire—of their inheritance in favour of his daughters, but is defeated by the virtuous exertions of his own offspring).

If these authors must be described as having 'trod the stage loosely,' what shall be said of an authoress who shared with them the applause of their age—of 'the divine

[1] Monsieur Raggou's notion of the considerations which should regulate the purchase of a gentleman's apparel is economical enough to admit of quotation: 'Buy shart!—who see my shart?'

[2] *Ante*, p. 457.

[3] A specimen will suffice to indicate its elevation. Sir Hercules confesses he would 'rather be thought an Atheist than not a Wit.' It is indeed, says his uncle the Alderman, 'impossible to part those two sins.' 'The truth is,' remarks Sir Hercules, 'they are linked together like sausages.' 'Ay,' is the reply, 'and they will fry together like sausages one day.'

Astræa,' MRS. APHRA BEHN[1] (1642–1689)? I would rather say of her as little as possible, and leave her to the infamy bestowed on her by Pope, as on the type of the worst profligacy of the Restoration drama. Of her non-dramatic productions, *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave*, on which Southerne founded his tragedy[2], deserves praise, not only for the generous sentiment which prompted it, but also for the execution—good in many respects, particularly in the very lifelike description of the West-Indian scenery. Her dramas, of which the earliest, *The Amorous Prince*, bears date 1671, were many in number; fifteen were written before, and two after, the Revolution of 1688. Partly versions of previous French or English plays, partly may be original, they (in some instances at least) entitle their authoress to the praise of great ingenuity in the contrivance of stage-situations; but to examine such a writer is a task to which no one is called upon to submit; nor is there any injustice in applying to her plays in general the implement of criticism recommended by Martial—the sponge[3].

Mrs. Aphra Behn (1642–1689).

Mrs. Behn was, as already noted[4], by no means the only female dramatist of her age; but her fame—such as it is—is mainly connected with the drama, while that of Mrs. Manley (died 1724), to whom no wrong is done by mentioning her in this connexion, rests chiefly on her clever, but outrageous novel. She wrote at least three tragedies, and one comedy. 'The celebrated Mrs. Centlivre,' of whom a brief notice will be given below, has some claims to be reckoned as the third head of this Chimaera—this monstrous birth of moral decay.

Other female comic dramatists.

The *literary* nadir of Restoration comedy—and indeed of the Restoration drama in general—was perhaps reached by THOMAS D'URFEY (1630–1723), who was fashionable in his

Thomas D'Urfey (1630–1723).

[1] *Plays Written by the Late Ingenious Mrs. Behn.* (Reprint.) 4 vols., 1871.

[2] Cf. *ante*, p. 553.

[3] *Epigr.* iv. 10; quoted (with a doubtful reading) by Ben Jonson in his *Discoveries*.—Those who prefer to make the acquaintance of some of Mrs. Behn's plays at secondhand, will find a brief notice of her comedies of *The Roundheads* (1682), *The Rover, or The Banished Cavaliers* (1677 and 1681), &c. in *The Retrospective Review*, vol. i.

[4] *Ante*, p. 557.

day as a songster and seems personally to have been a harmless creature. As he adapted or pilfered from Shakspere, Chapman, Marston, Beaumont and Fletcher, Shirley, Marmion, Dryden, and doubtless many others, besides occasionally attempting original works, as he altogether wrote twenty-nine plays which were acted, and three which were not, and as these comprised tragedies, comedies, and operas serious and comical, I feel unequal to the task of attempting an estimate of the comparative merits or demerits of D'Urfey's dramatic efforts[1].

Thomas Shadwell (1640–1692).

His life and politics.

It has been the fate of THOMAS SHADWELL[2] (1640–1692) to be remembered by after ages chiefly as the butt of Dryden's keenest and cruellest wit. Formerly friends and literary associates[3], they had been separated by politics; and when Dryden had produced his master-pieces of political satire in the *First Part of Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medal*, Shadwell retorted with a now forgotten answer, *The Medal of John Bayes*. Dryden's revenge was the character of Og in the *Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel*, and *Mac Flecknoe, or A Satire on the True Blue Protestant Poet, T. S.* It was not however in vain that Shadwell (to borrow the pious eloquence of his son) had in his dramas 'studied to serve his Country, rather than raise himself by the low Arts then in Practice;' for 'he succeeded so well

[1] I have looked at his *New Operas* (1721), which comprise a sequel to *The Rehearsal* entitled *The Two Queens of Brentford, or Bayes no Poetaster*, containing some allusions to the South Sea excitement (the Epilogue is a Trialogue between the Sun, the Rain, and the North Wind, under the names of Mississippi, Directius, and Bubble); a tragedy, *The Grecian Heroine, or The Fate of Tyranny* (written 1718), which is in blank-verse and ends with a blessing on 'the happy Revolution;' and a trashy opera, *Ariadne, or The Triumph of Bacchus*, in a variety of metres.

[2] *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Shadwell. With a Prefatory Memoir by his Son.* 4 vols., 1720. The memoir is in part rather naïvely written, as where the younger Shadwell says of his father: 'He had not only a strict Sense of Honour and Morality, but likewise (particularly in his latter days) a true Sense of Religion too.'—A good account of Shadwell's plays will be found in *The Retrospective Review* (*Second Series*, vol. ii).

[3] Shadwell joined Crowne and Dryden in the attack upon Settle's *The Empress of Morocco* (1673); cf. *ante*, p. 534; in 1676 Dryden was spoken of by Shadwell in the Preface to his *The Humorists* as the author's friend; in 1679 he wrote a prologue for Shadwell's *The True Widow*.

in his Design, as to merit the Honour of being made Poet Laureat and Historiographer Royal upon the Revolution by King William and Queen Mary.' Thus he was honoured by the representatives of the cause he faithfully served; and after death found a resting-place in Westminster Abbey, where the critical spirit or the political resentment of a Tory prelate had to content itself with revising his epitaph[1].

His The Sullen Lovers, or The Impertinents (1668).

In the Preface to his first comedy, *The Sullen Lovers, or The Impertinents* (1668), which is founded on *Les Fâcheux* of Molière, Shadwell extols Ben Jonson as 'the Man, of all the World, I most admire for his Excellency in Dramatick Poetry.' In his next comedy, *The Humourists* (1671), he appears as a genuine imitator of the old master for whom, in the Preface, he again avows his reverence. All the characters are succinctly defined in the list of *dramatis personae*.

The Humourists (1671).

The Virtuoso (1676).

The same model is followed in *The Virtuoso* (1676), which is in part a very amusing comedy. Among the chief characters are Snarl, who conceals his disreputable present under the cloak of angry laudations of the past[2],—Sir Formal Trifle, a concoctor of absurdly pedantic phrases, after inditing which he hopes (aside) that he has been 'florid and precise,'—Sir Nicholas Gimcrack the Virtuoso, whose 'scientific' vagaries remind us that we are in the early days of the Royal Society satirised by Butler[3],—and Sir Samuel Hartly, who claims to rank as a wit by virtue of a free expenditure of bluster and 'by-words[4].' Another comedy in the Jonsonian style is *Epsom Wells* (1675), though the resemblance to *Bartholomew Fair* (noted by

Epsom Wells (1675).

[1] Part of it, as originally written by Shadwell's son, ran:

'Majori enim sibi laudi duxit
Bonus Civis haberi
Quam Principibus Poetis inseri.'

[2] Thus he will not see plays, for 'he thanks God, he has seen 'em at Blackfriars.'

[3] Sir Nicholas learns the art of natation on a table—'I content myself with the speculative part of swimming, I care not for the Practic. I seldom bring anything to Use; 'tis not my way. Knowledge is my ultimate end.' (Act ii.)

[4] *e.g.* 'Hey! pull away, Rogues; in the twinkling of a Bed-staff: a witty way I have of expressing myself.'

Dibdin [1]) is not very strong. The most amusing character is Clodpate, the London-hating country-gentleman, well defined in the *dramatis personae* as 'a hearty, true English coxcomb.' But this play can hardly be described as more than a comedy of manners—while its coarseness is utterly revolting.

A True Widow (1679).

Passing by plays which can in no sense claim to be called original [2],—the comedy of *A True Widow* (1679), noteworthy only for the odd picture which it introduces on the stage of the stage itself [3], and that of *The Woman-Captain* (1680) [4],—I may give a word to a production by Shadwell, curious for more than one reason. *The Lancashire Witches and Tegue O'Divelly the Irish Priest* (1681) was directed not only against the Roman Catholics (the 'Popish Plot' is constantly referred to), but also against a particular type of clergymen of the Church of England, represented by the 'Foolish, Knavish, Popish, Arrogant, Insolent, yet, for his

The Woman-Captain (1670).

The Lancashire Witches and Tegue O'Divelly (1681).

[1] iv. 181.

[2] The 'tragi-comedy' of *The Royal Shepherdess* appears to have been merely a revision of the work of another author (Fountain). *Psyche*, a 'tragedy' (1674), should rather be called an opera. The author says in the Preface: 'I had rather be author of one Scene of Comedy, like some of Ben Jonson's, than of all the best Plays of this kind, that have been, or ever shall be written.' The story is the old one from Apuleius, with 'a few externals' borrowed from Molière; the writing is devoid of merit. *The Libertine*, a tragedy (1676), purports to be derived from *Il Atheisto Fulminato*,—the source of part of Cokain's Ovid (cf. *ante*, p. 451, note)—but was probably founded directly on Molière's *Le Festin de Pierre* (cf. *ante*, p. 463, note 4). Don John's comic servant Jacomo has the familiar features of Leporello (Sganarelle in Molière). The play is sensational enough to satisfy the robustest appetite, and its most exciting scene impressed itself upon the popular imagination: ''tis like eating with the Ghost in *The Libertine*,' says Novel in Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer* (ii. 1). *The Miser* (1671) had been avowedly founded on Molière, though Shadwell considers himself to have added so much that he 'may call more than half the play his own.' (Fielding's *The Miser* (1733) was likewise based on *L'Avare*.) *The History of Timon of Athens, the Man-Hater* (1678) is Shakspere's tragedy, which, says Shadwell, 'I can truly say, I have made into a play.'

[3] In act iv, where a play-house is represented and part of a play (within the play) is acted. 'Several young Coxcombs fool with the Orange-Women.' Prig proposes a game at 'Lang-trilloo' 'in the Box.' Women come in masked.

[4] A popular play, revived in 1744 under the title of *The Prodigal*. Unless I mistake, this comedy is indebted to Fletcher and Shirley's *The Night-Walker*, (*ante*, p. 225).

Interest, Slavish' chaplain Smerk. Of course in the Preface any desire of reflecting upon the Church is disclaimed[1]; but the intention is obvious, particularly inasmuch as a protest on behalf of tolerance towards the Dissenters is introduced. Secondly, the comedy is interesting as illustrating the popular belief in witchcraft, in which the author evidently in his heart shares[2]. Thirdly, it contains one of the earliest, though as has been seen not altogether the earliest[3], Irishman of the comic stage, in the character of the villainous priest. Shadwell re-introduced it in the comedy of *The Amorous Bigot, with the Second Part of Tegue O'Divelly* (1690).

The Amorous Bigot, &c. (1690).

Shadwell's remaining plays are all examples of the species in which he most excelled. But to describe *The Squire of Alsatia* (1688) as a comedy in the style of Jonson seems to imply higher praise than it deserves; it is rather in the style of Jonson's imitator Cartwright, whose *Ordinary* it something resembles in conception. Shadwell deserves some credit for having in this lively and vigorous play sought to brand a real social evil, which indeed was not long afterwards removed by statute. The 'Squire of Alsatia' is a young heir whom the rascally denizens of that locality have enticed into their clutches, whence he is ultimately rescued[4]. The fight between the 'Alsatians' and the Templars at the Whitefriars gate of the Temple gives a curious picture of scenes which really disgraced the London of the day; and the cant talked by the

The Squire of Alsatia (1688).

[1] Shadwell points to the fact that Smerk is disgraced in the play. He does not think it worth while to disclaim animosity against the Church of Rome, though Tegue is a vile rascal.—Much of the play was struck out by authority; hence the passages which have the chief historical interest for us are now printed in italics. Cf. Morley, *First Sketch*, p. 676.

[2] The priest Tegue tries to exorcise the witches 'per Melchisedec, per Bethlehem Gabor, per omne quod exit in *um*, seu Graecum sive Latinum,'—but to no purpose. In his Preface, Shadwell modestly disclaims the hope of equalling Shakspere 'in fancy' in the magical part of the play. Though he declares himself incredulous, he manifestly treats witchcraft as a reality. He had read up a good many books; but the poetry is altogether contemptible.

[3] Cf. *ante*, p. 532, note, as to Sir R. Howard's *The Committee*.

[4] For the plot both Dibdin and Geneste compare the *Adelphi*.

Bury-Fair (1689).

inhabitants of the sacred precinct may invite the study of specialists. (A glossary is considerately appended.) *Bury-Fair* (1689) flies at less dangerous game, its chief ridicule being directed against the folly of the English *Précieuses ridicules* of the day[1]. *Bartholomew Fair* doubtless suggested the background of this comedy—the fair at Bury St. Edmunds.

The Scourers (1693).

The Scowrers (1693), combines social with political satire, the former element being represented by the character of a foolish Jacobite alderman who glories in King Lewis,—the latter by the band of boon-companions and swaggerers, whose chief is in the end converted, much to the disgust of the rest. Finally, in the posthumous comedy of *The Volunteers, or The Stock Jobbers* (acted 1692), Shadwell comes as near to comedy of character as in any of his plays. While the Jobbers or projectors for patents constitute good side-figures, a clever contrast is presented between the rough old Cavalier officer and the Anabaptist Cromwellian veteran 'very stout and godly, but somewhat Immoral' (he has been a brave soldier in his day, but now 'turns a penny in the way of Stock-jobbing'). In addition, we have the 'most luxurious effeminate Volunteer' Sir Nicholas Dainty and the 'ugly sub-Beau' Sir Timothy Kastril, who are equally men of their time in their mortal hatred of war[2]. The play is however disfigured by the grossest indecency.

The Volunteers, or The Stock-Jobbers (1692).

Shadwell's characteristics as a dramatist.

Posterity need not, as he avers his disappointed adversaries did, grudge Shadwell the recompense which his consistent support of a cause as noble as theirs obtained for

[1] Shadwell is stated to have been indebted in this play, not only to Molière's comedy, but also to the Duke of Newcastle's *Triumphant Widow*. In Shadwell, Mrs. Fantast's French tastes and French vocables are diverting enough. ('Heroick Numbers upon Love and Honour are most ravissant, most surprenant, and a Tragedy is so Touchant! I die at a Tragedy; I'll swear I do'). Oldwit too, who recites 'pretty things' like Sir Benjamin Backbite, is an amusing representative of the *laudator temporis acti*—a character dramatists have frequently taken a natural pleasure in ridiculing—he 'was a Critic at Blackfriars, but at Cambridge, none so great as I with Jack Cleveland,' &c.

[2] Sir Timothy is not a Jacobite 'nor a Williamite neither;' ''tis all one to me who reigns, if I can keep my 2000 Pound a year, and enjoy myself with the Ladies.'

him[1]. It need not even cavil too closely at his boast that he was not afraid of them

> 'till they have shown you more Variety
> Of natural, unstol'n Comedy than he[2].'

Much that he produced he fitted so well to himself that he might almost claim credit for the appropriated apparel; and in the invention of comic characters he was often original. He had some of the industry of Ben Jonson; some of his humour; and much of his healthiness of spirit. If he is often grossly indecent, it has been, I think truly, observed that he is not profane[3]; and if he altogether lacks elevation, he is by no means deficient in moral purpose. As a comedian of manners he seems as truthful as he is undoubtedly vivid,—but his grain is coarse, and brutal as the manners and sentiments of his age most assuredly were in many respects, they can hardly have been so uniformly brutal as he represents them. He did little or nothing to advance his art; but his vigour of comic invention, his hatred of political shams and social abuses, and his healthy hatred of much that was really inimical to the national future, contributed to arrest the decay to which English comedy was hastening. Few, however, besides professed literary or historical students need to bestow more than a passing glance upon his pictures of his age.

Shadwell and Ben Jonson.

Shadwell's merits and shortcomings.

In WILLIAM WYCHERLEY[4] (1640–1715) we at last indisputably have a comic dramatist of real power. His contemporaries variously praised his careful workmanship and his facile genius[5]; but they were at one in extolling

William Wycherley (1640–1715).

[1] 'Loyal writers of the last two Reigns,
Who tir'd their Pens for Popery and Chains,
Grumble at the Reward of all his Pains.'
Prologue to *The Scourers.*

[2] *Ib.*

[3] Geneste, ii. 41.

[4] Wycherley's plays were edited, together with those of Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar, by Leigh Hunt in 1840. Macaulay's *Essay* on this publication, which contains biographical and critical notices, is well known. In the case of Wycherley it points out the sources of several of his plots, scenes, or characters.

[5] Rochester, in his Imitation of one of Horace's *Epistles*, bestows on

His salient characteristics as a dramatist.

the masculine boldness which (in allusion to the name of the hero of his most successful comedy) obtained for him the honourable sobriquet of 'Manly' Wycherley. It may however be well to reduce the compliment implied in the epithet to narrower dimensions. The general characteristics of Wycherley as a dramatist may I think be summed up as follows. His merits lie in the vigour with which his characters are drawn, the clearness with which they stand out from one another, and the naturalness with which he both constructs his plots and chooses his language. His wit is less sparkling and spontaneous than that of Congreve or of Vanbrugh; he is, as Leigh Hunt says, somewhat heavy as well as brawny in his step, and he lacks in general the gaiety of spirit which is the most charming phase of comic humour. On the other hand, he excels in satire of an intenser kind; his sarcasms are as keen as they are cruel; and the cynicism of his wit cannot prevent us from acknowledging its power. But while he ruthlessly uncloaks the vices of his age, his own moral tone is affected by their influence to as deplorable a degree as that of the

Wycherley the epithet of 'slow' (which Pope repeated), and says that he

'earns hard whate'er he gains;
He wants no Judgment, and he spares no Pains.'

An opposite view of Wycherley's method of workmanship is maintained by Granville (Lord Lansdowne) in *A Letter with a Character of Mr. Wycherley*, Lansdowne's *Works*, ii. 108 *seqq.* 'In him,' it is observed in the same letter, 'every Syllable, every Thought is masculine.' See also Dryden's Preface to *The State of Innocence*. King Charles II at one time proposed to make Wycherley tutor to his son the Duke of Richmond; King James II, after witnessing a performance of *The Plain-Dealer*, conferred a pension on its author, who at that time sorely needed it. It is said that King James liked to hear his own system of government described as 'Plain Dealing'—the phrase must have become a cant phrase of politics, for in 1716 we find Rowe in the Prologue to Mrs. Centlivre's *The Cruel Gift* complimenting the then Prince of Wales, who was present at the author's benefit, by bidding the spectators

'In his each Feature Truth and Candour trace,
And read Plain Dealing written in his Face.'

If Pope's account be trustworthy—it is known how the pair quarrelled on account of the severity with which the young poet had revised the poems entrusted to him for the purpose by the veteran—Wycherley, who as a young man had left the Church of Rome (in which he was born), returned to it before his death.

most light-hearted and unthinking of contemporary dramatists.

Love in a Wood, or St. James' Park (1672).

Of Wycherley's comedies the earliest, *Love in a Wood, or St. James' Park* (1672), is in the style of Etherege and Sedley,—indeed *The Mulberry Garden* of the latter has been justly held to have suggested this play. Its satire on manners is, however, perhaps more incisive and contemptuous than theirs; and it already exhibits signs of a realistic vigour recalling the stronger hand of Middleton rather than that of the Restoration writers. The mixture of respectable and the reverse of respectable characters in *Love in a Wood* is however so puzzling that few will care to take the trouble of drawing accurate distinctions. Dapperwit is the fool, and Alderman Tripe the deserving victim, of this comedy.

The Gentleman Dancing-Master (1672).

The Gentleman Dancing-Master (1672) resembles Molière in manner more than any other of Wycherley's plays; indeed its intrigue has been compared to that of *L'École des Femmes*, but the resemblance is by no means close. The English work may be described as a capital farce, written with genuine vigour and freshness of humour; and to my mind this is by far the most agreeable of Wycherley's plays. The contrast between the starched father who affects the Spaniard and the foolish young man who assumes the airs and speech of a Frenchman is fairly amusing; but the fun of the plot is admirable. The lover in carrying on his intrigue in the disguise of a dancing-master is protected both by his rival and the lady's father against the suspicions of an old aunt; and the dancing-lesson scenes (suggested by Calderon's *El Maestro de Danzar*) are, if not very refined, as good as anything of the sort in modern comedy or farce[1].

The Country Wife (1673).

The two remaining plays of Wycherley are the most characteristic among their author's works. *The Country Wife* (1673) in its plot (which seems indebted to two of Molière's comedies for its groundwork[2]) reaches the extremity of the

[1] The impudence of the Epilogue is at all events in perfect keeping with the character of the personage who speaks it.

[2] *viz. L'École des Maris* and *L'École des Femmes.*

revolting; yet one cannot wonder at the revived popularity the play enjoyed upon the stage. For not only is it written with considerable spirit, besides being seasoned with that cynicism which is Wycherley's most peculiar element[1], but it contains one character—of the *fausse ingénue* type—which naturally lends itself to the art of a good actress of a particular kind[2]. But it was indeed a 'frank age[3]' which could tolerate such a play in any form or under any circumstances. In *The Plain-Dealer* (1674) the cynicism of Wycherley has reached its acme. It begins with the Prologue[4], where 'the coarse dauber of the coming scenes' announces his intention 'to follow life and nature only,' to 'display you as you are,' to exhibit his 'fine lady' as 'a mercenary jilt,' and his 'men of wit and pleasure' as 'dull rogues,' while he

The Plain-Dealer (1674).

> 'draws a friend only to custom just,
> And makes him naturally break his trust.'

And it continues down to the 'moral' at the close:

> 'Yet for my sake, let no one e'er confide
> In tears, or oaths, in love, or friend untried.'

As for the plot of this famous comedy, it is as horrible as the chief character, Manly the 'Plain-Dealer,' is revolting.

[1] A specimen or two will suffice to illustrate it:

'*Horner.* Ay, your arrantest cheat is your trustee or executor; your jealous man, the greatest cuckold; your churchman the greatest atheist; and your noisy pert rogue of a wit, the greatest fop, dullest ass, and worst company.' (i. 1.)

'*Sir Jasper.* Woman, made for man's companion—

'*Horner.* So is that soft, gentle, tame and more noble creature a spaniel, and has all their tricks; can fawn, lie down, suffer beating, and fawn the more; barks at your friends when they come to see you. . . . . And all the difference is, the spaniel's the more faithful animal, and fawns but upon one master.' (ii. 1.)

'*Sparkish.* I can deny you nothing: for though I have known thee a great while, never go, if I do not love thee as well as a new acquaintance.' iii. 2.)

[2] Mrs. Pinchwife was a popular character of Mrs. Jordan's.

[3] Cf. iii. 2. The remarks on *The Country-Wife* in *The Plain-Dealer* (ii. 1) can hardly be called a defence.

[4] Or, indeed, in the printed play with the Dedication, which contains a not unwarranted sarcasm against the dramatists of the age as fond of 'talking to you of the rules of writing (like the French authors), to show you and my reader I understand 'em, in my epistle, lest neither of you should find it out by the play.'

The former cannot be described; the latter is best judged by contrasting it with the original—if it can be so called—which suggested it, the noble hero of Molière's immortal *Misanthrope*. Manly is a navy captain who comes to shore with a rooted hatred of mankind, to which he gives vent on every occasion and in terms which would justify his being taken up as a public nuisance. Even apart from the monstrous revenge which he takes upon the cause of his misanthropy, he is a brutal antitype of the noble and honourable Alceste whom Molière has drawn with so much humour and so much tenderness. Such a character could only be tolerated—and admired!—by a society which knew itself to be vile, and was tickled by hearing itself called so to its face. I need give no examples of the scalp-hunting misanthropy which seemed philosophy in the eyes of the bad world to which it was preached; nor reproduce in detail the invectives of this Timon of the reigns of Charles II and James II—a denouncer of vice himself as coarse and loathsome as the vice which he denounces[1].

In speaking of this comedy, it would neither be possible nor desirable to keep asunder the moral and the literary points of view. The picture of society which *The Plain-Dealer* offers is not altogether a false one, nor is the operation of such a society as that which surrounds Manly upon such a character as Manly's misrepresented. Neither therefore as a comedy of manners nor as a comedy of character—and it may justly lay claim to the latter and higher rank—can this remarkable production be properly said to fail. To us it is so utterly revolting, because of the absence of all moral relief, without which few dramatic characters are endurable—least of all a type naturally so offensive as that of the man who hates his kind. But working within the limits of his own horizon, with nothing perceptible to him but a vicious world hateful on account of

Wycherley's social satire.

[1] I cannot think that M. Taine, in his *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise* (livre iii. chap. 1), has at all exaggerated the impression which this 'modèle d'une brute déclarée et énergique' makes upon the mind of a modern reader.—A scene in this play (ii. 1) is in part translated from Molière's *La Critique de l'École des Femmes*.

the palpable grossness of its outward pretences, Wycherley must be allowed to have worked with vigour and effect, and to have produced what is indisputably one of the most powerful dramas of its age[1]. To no other of his plays can a similar praise be given. *The Country Wife* is indeed a remarkable attempt to paint the times as the very saturnalia of self-indulgence; it is a satire upon the very name of virtue, the conception of which is conspicuous by its absence from the society here depicted. The plot is that of an extravagant farce—of a farce such as an Aristophanes might perchance have invented, but which he would have enveloped in a scenery of burlesque imaginations to which the modern mind must remain a stranger. The lawlessness of lust running riot in actual society is a combination too realistic not to produce nausea in the mind; and it is only when we remember that the society Wycherley paints was not that of a *nation*, that we recover from our astonishment at the fact that a society of which such a picture was possible should ever have risen from its decay. Happy the nation which has been exposed to the influence of such tendencies only in an age when it was not yet democratised, when the town and the country were still in a great degree unfamiliar spheres to one another, and when the heart could remain untouched by the disease which was preying upon the extremities.

William Congreve (1672–1728).

The most brilliant of all the comic dramatists of the later Stuart period is beyond all doubt WILLIAM CONGREVE (1672–1728). In life he received more than his share of praise and honours. The greatest of his literary

[1] The whole of *The Plain-Dealer* may be said to be admirably written; and even the most revolting scene of the play displays singular dramatic power. Some of the witticisms have an almost proverbial ring—see *e.g.* Manly's estimate of the value of a lord's title (i. 1), which recalls Burns; Olivia's description of the coxcomb Mr. Novel, 'who rather than not rail will rail at the dead, whom none speak ill of; rather than not flatter, will flatter the poets of the age, whom none will flatter' (ii. 1); and Eliza's confession as to her sex: 'All wise observers understand us now-a-days, as they do dreams, almanacs, and Dutch gazettes, by the contrary' (ii. 1).—The Widow Blackacre is justly regarded as an amusing character. She was borrowed from the Countess in *Les Plaideurs* of Racine.

His contemporary fame.

contemporaries vied with personages of the highest rank—if not uniformly of the highest character—in acknowledging his eminence. While Government heaped on him sinecures of which no man was better qualified to perform the duties, his literary merits were recognised in tributes of various kinds by Dryden and Steele, and Pope and Voltaire. Nor is there any difficulty in understanding the growth and the continuance of such a popularity, to which a funeral of pompous solemnity and a grave in Westminster Abbey were the final testimonies. In the first place, Congreve was always prosperous—and there is nothing which better commends itself to the favour of the world than prosperity. A personal charm of manner must have contributed its influence. And the literary qualities of Congreve might well dazzle the contemporaries of his early manhood in days when Dryden was growing old and Pope was still a child.

Congreve's wit.

Among these qualities one has always justly been regarded as pre-eminent. Congreve is indisputably one of the very wittiest of English writers. It is quite true that in giving this praise to a comic dramatist—for it is as such that Congreve can alone be held to have really excelled—the highest praise has not been given. 'Wit,' says Congreve in a letter well deserving of attention [1], 'is often mistaken for humour;' 'the saying of humorous things does not distinguish characters; for every person in

[1] See Congreve's letter to Dennis *Concerning Humour in Comedy*, dated July 10th, 1695 (in *Select Works of John Dennis*, ii. 514).—In the same spirit Sheffield Duke of Buckinghamshire in his *Essay on Poetry* (temp. Charles II) had written:

'Another fault which often may befall
Is, when the wit of some great poet shall
So overflow, that is, be none at all,
That ev'n his fools speak sense, as if possess'd,
And each by inspiration breaks his jest.
If once the justness of each part be lost,
Well we may laugh, but at the poet's cost.
That silly thing men call *sheerwit* avoid,
With which our age so nauseously is cloy'd;
Humour is all; wit should be only brought
To turn agreeably some proper thought.'

a Comedy may be allow'd to speak them. From a witty man they are expected; and even a fool may be permitted to stumble on 'em by chance. Tho' I make a difference betwixt Wit and Humour, yet I do not think that humorous characters exclude Wit: No, but the manner of Wit should be adapted to the Humour.' Congreve therefore recognised the danger incident to an abundance of wit of its injuriously affecting the drawing of characters and that clear distinction between them which is indispensable in the best kind of comedy. This result he cannot be said to have altogether escaped; and the too sustained brilliancy of his dialogue, which enraptured his own age, must by those who are no longer under the influence of a transitory fashion be recognised as a fault of excess. At the same time, Congreve possessed a real power of drawing character as well as of constructing plots; and it seems to me an exaggeration to regard the brilliancy of his dialogue as his solitary merit, or as one which not only outshone, but, as the phrase is, 'killed' the other qualities requisite in a comic dramatist. Moreover, the graceful ease of his dialogue is almost as noteworthy as its wittiness. In the latter respect he is the superior of all his predecessors and contemporaries of the post-Restoration period, among whom Dryden and perhaps Vanbrugh alone approached him, and Sheridan is his only successor. In ease of style he far surpasses Wycherley; Vanbrugh, and still more Farquhar, lack the element of grace which he possesses; while Etherege and the rest—even Dryden—fall short of him in polish as writers of comic prose[1]. Congreve is therefore to be regarded as a genuine artist—the more so that he understood how to conceal his art. For it would be a mistake to suppose that effects such as he produced can be the result of a mere copying of the very happiest examples furnished by actual life. This error, into which second-rate comic dramatists are only too prone to fall, was not one of which Congreve was likely to be guilty[2].

His other merits as a comic dramatist.

[1] It may perhaps be noted that the occasional lyrics in Congreve's plays are decidedly superior as compositions to those in most of the contemporary comedies.

[2] 'I believe,' he says in the letter to Dennis already quoted, 'if a Poet

His merits, I have said, are by no means confined to style, though it is in this direction alone that they are superlative. His comedies as will be seen are few, and vary from one another in more respects than one. Though they are not uniformly devoid of moral purpose, not one of them can be acquitted from the charge of gross and intentional indecency, and of a deplorable frivolity of tone. The good-breeding of Congreve was no sufficient safeguard against his falling in with the worst tastes of the age which delighted in him; but he is at least free from the brutality of Wycherley, and seems less coarse even to a modern reader than either Vanbrugh or Farquhar. Yet it is a melancholy reflexion that a writer of such gifts and capable of exercising so great a power over his age should only, when essaying a branch of his art for which he was least fitted, have risen to the height of a desire to prove that 'a Play may be with industry so disposed (in spite of the licentious practice of the modern theatre) as to become sometimes an innocent and not unprofitable entertainment [1].'

His indecency.

In Congreve's earliest comedy, *The Old Bachelor* (1693)—which met with an extraordinary success [2]—the writing is already excellent, and distinguished especially by its lightness from anything that had preceded it in the post-Restoration drama. In most of the leading characters there is however nothing original; it would be easy to find prototypes of Heartwell, who pretends to be a misogynist but is in reality a victim to female wiles, of the blustering coward Captain Bluffe, and of the demure but deep Mrs. Fondlewife. Yet these together with a number of other characters furnish an abundant variety, and the action is

His comedies: The Old Bachelor (1693).

should steal a Dialogue of any length, from the Extempore Discourse of the two wittiest Men upon Earth, he would find the Scene but coldly receiv'd by the Town.'

[1] See the Dedication to *The Mourning Bride*.

[2] Dryden, of whose weaknesses jealousy against possible rivals was not one, returned this comedy which had been submitted to his judgment with the remark that it was the best first play ever brought under his notice; and Lord Halifax immediately rewarded the author with a place under Government. *The Old Bachelor* was acted as late as 1789.

both brisk and diverting[1]. Morally, both the plots of which the play is composed are objectionable.

The Double-Dealer (1693).

Its successor, *The Double-Dealer* (1693), justifies the assertion in Dryden's generous but extravagant lines on this play, that its author, and only he, was 'lineal to the throne[2].' It is undoubtedly one of the best comedies in our dramatic literature; yet unhappily this praise cannot be substantiated, since the nature of the plot forbids description. Congreve claims complete originality for this plot, which is constructed with the utmost skill, and declares his desire to have been to make it as strong as possible because it was single. He has certainly shown that no kind of comedy is in reality so effective as that in which the action is *one*, although presenting unexpected turns to the very last[3]. The characters are not many, but well distinguished; the interest however concentrates itself on two of the most effective pictures of villainous cunning and evil passion ever conceived by a comic dramatist—Maskwell and Lady Touchwood. Neither of these exceeds the proportions befitting a comedy; but the execution cannot be said to fall short of the conception in real power—especially in the case of Maskwell, the key to whose system of conduct is furnished by the motto of the play borrowed from Terence[4]: he tells the truth to both sides and yet cheats them both. In the writing one is struck by the wonderful lightness and naturalness of the dialogue as well as by the brilliancy of wit shown in repartee, in which *The Double-Dealer* likewise abounds[5]. It should be added, that although there are episodes in this comedy of the most blameworthy character, the issue of the main plot is entirely on the side of virtue; the defeat of the

[1] The very numerous succession of 'scenes' in Congreve is worth observing. Stage-management must have been in a state of high perfection to allow of his plays being performed with success.

[2] The same compliment was generously paid to Congreve by Southerne; see his lines in Scott's *Dryden*, xi. 61, note.

[3] The conclusion of act iv and the *dénouement* in act v seem to me equally excellent.

[4] 'Vera dicendo ambos fallere.'

[5] See *e.g.* iii. 10, which will at once recall Sheridan.

artful Maskwell and the shameless Lady Touchwood furnishes in truth one of the most powerful dramatic illustrations of the cheering and wholesome maxim, which the stage at least may fairly be allowed to enforce, that Truth will out at last. This admirable comedy was not successful. The whims of the public are not always easily accounted for[1]; in any case there is genius enough in the play to warrant the enthusiasm it excited in Dryden, though not to justify the terms in which he gave expression to it.

Love for Love (1695).

Love for Love (1695) is a very amusing comedy, containing a considerable variety of characters. Among these the preference will perhaps be given to Jeremy, one of those witty 'gentlemen's gentlemen' whom Congreve bequeathed to Sheridan and to modern comedy at large[2]. The would-be astrologer Foresight seemingly carries us back to an earlier age of the drama; but the belief in palmistry and astrology had by no means expired before the days in which Free-thinking began. Several of the other characters are highly diverting[3]; but it is again to be regretted that part of this play is of a nature to exclude the whole from general reading. Nor can one help remarking that the unselfish constancy of the lover Valentine is regarded as a miracle even by its object, Angelica.

The Way of the World (1700).

In *The Way of the World* (1700) Congreve proposed to himself a task of which the hazard was obvious to himself.

[1] Leigh Hunt's explanations seem to me hardly satisfactory.

[2] He has 'the seeds of rhetoric and oratory in his head.' 'I have,' he says, 'been taught at Cambridge;' on which the beau Tattle observes, 'Ay! 'tis well enough for a servant to be bred at a university; but the education is a little too pedantic for a gentleman.'

[3] Tattle was not forgotten by Sheridan when he wrote *The School for Scandal*—see particularly i. 13; but Sheridan was altogether a follower of Congreve and Vanbrugh.—Miss Prue and Ben are an amusing couple—country-girl and sea-monster.—Valentine's mock madness is entertaining; of course in Congreve a madman is as witty as everybody else. 'I'll tell you one thing,' he remarks to the lawyer Buckram. 'It's a question that would puzzle an arithmetician if you should ask him whether the Bible saves more souls in Westminster Abbey, or damns more in Westminster Hall; for my part, I am Truth, and can't tell; I have very few acquaintance.' *Sir Sampson.* 'Body o' me, he talks sensibly in his madness! has he no intervals?' *Jeremy.* 'Very short, sir.' (iv. 7.)

His intention, as he states in the Dedication, was, in lieu of the gross fools of ordinary comedy, who 'instead of moving our mirth ought very often to excite our compassion,' to 'design some characters which should appear ridiculous, not so much through a natural folly (which is incorrigible and therefore not proper for the stage) as through an affected wit—a wit which at the same time that it is affected, is also false.' The difficulty, as he says, is that hasty judges will often take false wit for true, and be unable to distinguish between a Witwoud and a Truewit. The result was a play of considerable power, but perhaps less pleasing than any other by the same author. *The Way of the World* is in reality a bitter satire [1], though the weapon of the author is still a foil elegantly handled. The character of Lady Wishfort is almost too loathsome for comedy; but Witwoud is as diverting as he is original—a man afflicted by a perfect cacoëthes of feeble repartee—'I cannot help it, madam,' he says, 'though 'tis against myself.' The play failed on the stage; and after this Congreve wrote no more.

His tragedy of The Mourning Bride (1697).

His long celebrated tragedy of *The Mourning Bride* had been produced already in 1697. This play, which is in blank-verse, is a love-tragedy with a last act of the most sensational effectiveness—except that the happy union of Almeria and Osmyn-Alphonso at the close is something of an anticlimax after so many deaths. There are some well-written passages in the play [2], but being unequal to really sustained flights of passion, the author has to take refuge in rant, and Lee could not have surpassed some of his

[1] 'Satire, he thinks, you ought not to expect;
For so reform'd a town who dare correct?' (*Prologue.*)
The play however contains some very amusing scenes as well as some very objectionable ones. Among the former I may instance v. 5,—where a declaration *à la mode* is made, both the lady and the gentleman being solely anxious to secure the conditions (*viz.* those of perfect freedom and tolerance on both sides) on which they are willing to make one another happy. The waiting-maids too are even more amusing than usual.

[2] Among them the description of the temple in ii. 3, so absurdly extolled by Dr. Johnson. Almeria's exclamation in a scene following closely upon this is a rather too obvious reminiscence of *Hamlet*.

attempts of this description[1]. In brief, we may agree with Lessing, that Congreve's single attempt in tragic poetry proves this field to have been altogether out of his range. Congreve is also the author of a mask, *The Judgment of Paris*, and of an opera, *Semele*[2].

Sir John Vanbrugh (1666 *circ.*–1726).

Characteristics of his comedy.

Less brilliant than Congreve, and altogether his inferior both as a dramatist and as a wit, Sir JOHN VANBRUGH (1666 *circ.*–1726) is in my opinion unsurpassed by any of our post-Restoration writers of comedy in the vivacity, gaiety, and ease of his prose dialogue. He has also enriched the comic stage by one supremely ludicrous character which may be fairly called his own—the Lord Foppington of *The Relapse*—and has invented some others which are almost equally extravagant and almost equally true to life. He borrowed with skill while he constructed with ease, and is altogether one of the most entertaining of the dramatists of his age. His morality may be said to sink below that of Congreve—if indeed it can be said to sink at all; for such is the levity of this author that it is difficult to weigh even his sins in any very serious balance. The utter frivolity of the later Stuart comedy has no more signal representative than Vanbrugh, though it is well known that he was far from being a mere man of pleasure[3].

The Relapse, or Virtue in Danger (1697).

Vanbrugh, it may be unhesitatingly affirmed, never surpassed his earliest effort as a comic dramatist. *The Relapse, or Virtue in Danger* (1697) seems to have been written as a sequel to Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift, or The Fool in Fashion* (1696), in which Sir Novelty Fashion, the first in Cibber's series of fops, appears, and the erring

[1] See especially the conclusion of the 'great scene' (iii. 6); and Almeria's offer (iv. 7) to clothe the rotten bones of her (supposedly) dead lover with her own flesh—a species of metensarcosis altogether original. The bathos of the concluding lines equals that of the moral of Buckinghamshire's *Julius Caesar*.

[2] The former of these is short and commonplace; *Semele*, though also a mere trifle, is a well-conceived and executed production of its kind. The admixture of short rhythmic lines in both this *Semele* and Schiller's little drama suggests the possibility of Schiller's having cast a passing glance at Congreve's opera; but there is no real resemblance between the two pieces.

[3] He is known to fame as the architect of Blenheim and other mansions; and filled the offices of comptroller of the royal works, and surveyor of the works at Greenwich Hospital under George I, by whom he was knighted.

Loveless is reclaimed by his virtuous wife Amanda. Whatever may be thought of the morality of Cibber, it would be difficult to point to a more recklessly immoral play than Vanbrugh's, notwithstanding the triumphant assertion at the close of the strength of female virtue in the character of the wronged and tempted wife[1]. Her faithless husband goes scotfree for his sins; and there is no excuse for the unblushing effrontery of the picture. But it must be allowed that after the first scene has in hastily but not ill-written blank-verse exposed the situation, the prose dialogue of the remainder moves with contagious gaiety and spirit. The bye-plot of Lord Foppington (the ennobled Sir Novelty), his brother Tom Fashion, their joint bride Miss Hoyden and her father Sir Tunbelly Clumsey, is one of the most amusing things in later English comedy, and is well known to have been reproduced by Sheridan in his *A Trip to Scarborough*. Lord Foppington is in a word the best fop ever brought on the stage—unsurpassed and unsurpassable, and admirable from first to last. The 'natural sprauts' of his lordship's 'brain' entitle him to a pre-eminence which in its kind seems to me beyond cavil[2].

The Provoked Wife (1697).

The Provoked Wife (1697), though not so amusing as its predecessor, displays a considerable *vis comica;* but the realism here is at times of a very gross character. Sir John Brute, who fully deserves his name, may probably have been only too true a picture of actual life; but one cannot look upon him without the disgust he excites in his

[1] *The Relapse* is one of the plays selected by Jeremy Collier for special analysis and reprobation.

[2] '*Amanda.* . . . 'tis I think the inside of a book should recommend it most to us.

'*Lord Foppington.* That, I confess, I am not altogether so fand of. Far to mind the inside of a book, is to entertain one's self with the forced product of another man's brain. Now I think a man of quality and breeding may be much better diverted with the natural Sprauts of his own.' (ii. 1.) This scene and i. 3 are supremely excellent.—As to the dialect put into the mouth of Lord Foppington, 'long after it had ceased to be spoken in fashionable circles,' see a note to Macaulay's *History of England*, chap. iii, where it is stated that 'Lord Sunderland was a great master of this court tune, as Roger North calls it; and Titus Oates affected it in the hope of passing for a fine gentleman.'—Voltaire Gallicised Lord Foppington as *Le Comte de Boursoufle.*

wife. Lady Fanciful cannot be ranked as an equal of Lord Foppington; but her French fille-de-chambre is a divertingly true type. *The False Friend* (1702), of which the scene is laid in Spain, is clearly taken from a foreign—probably in the first instance from a French[1]—original; it is a comedy of intrigue, with a well-contrived though hardly novel plot. The Prologue avows the author's object to be, instead of reforming the stage all at once, to 'steal the immorality' of plays away. If so, he addresses himself to the first step in his task after the most cautious fashion. In *The Confederacy* (1705) Vanbrugh is quite at home again. The plot of this play, which might be called 'the adventures of a necklace,' is very clever, and the dialogue distinguished by the author's usual vivacity. Dick Amlet and his mother make an effective pair, and Flippanta the lady's-maid is a fine shameless specimen of her kind. The morality of this comedy is on Vanbrugh's usual level, which may be described as the very lowest to which English comedy has ever sunk; and the rascally Dick is made perfectly happy at the close. *The Mistake* (1705) is a comedy of intrigue, playing in Spain, taken in part from Molière's *Le Dépit Amoureux*[2]. It is amusing, but its comic servants, Lopez and Sancho and the waiting-maid Jacinta, are familiar types, while the bravo Toledo (v. 1) and the tutor Metaphrastus (ii. 1) recall respectively the swordsmen and the pedants of earlier comedy. Vanbrugh likewise translated from the French a farce by d'Ancourt, *The Country House* (1705), which is not striking; and left behind him an unfinished comedy, *A Journey to London*, to which a fifth act was added by Colley Cibber, who produced the play under the title of *The Provoked Husband* (1728). The idea of the comedy is novel and instructive[3]; but I

The False Friend (1702).

The Confederacy (1705).

The Mistake (1705).

The Country House (1705).

A Journey to London (unfinished).

[1] French words are very oddly left in the text.

[2] Vanbrugh translated two other of Molière's plays; cf. *ante*, p. 474, note.

[3] A country-gentleman who has spent a large sum on his election for the borough of *Gobble-guinea* comes to town as a parliament-man, in the expectation of a place of £1000 a year from the noble lord at the head of the Government as a requital of his exertions. He brings his whole family with him—and his wife very nearly verifies the prediction of his morose uncle that 'before her husband has got five pound by a speech at Westminster,

cannot think that upon the whole this fragment exhibits the sparkling vivacity of most of Vanbrugh's previous works. Among these I have not mentioned his very clever version of Boursault's *Æsop* (1697), which can hardly be called a comedy, but deserves much praise for its execution [1]. Vanbrugh also adapted Fletcher's *Pilgrim* for the stage of his own day, on a memorable occasion already noticed (1700 [2]).

Æsop (1697).

Were it not perhaps for one of his plays, GEORGE FARQUHAR (1678–1707), who was an Irishman by birth and began life as an actor at Dublin, would hardly de-

George Farquhar (1678–1707).

she will have lost five hundred at cards and dice in the parish of St. James.' There is something in the satire on 'political ambition' of the kind exemplified is this play which gives it a character of its own. 'Humphry,' says the M.P. to his son, 'perhaps you'll be a senator in time, as your father is now; when you are, remember your country; spare nothing for the good of your country; and when you come home at the end of the sessions, you will find yourself so adored, that your country will come and dine with you every day in the week.' (iii. 1.) From a note to the *Memoirs of Sir John Reresly*, p. 413, by their recent editor, Mr. J. J. Cartwright, it appears that Yorkshire tradition identified the Sir Francis Headpiece of this comedy with Sir Thomas Yarburgh, twice M.P. for Pontefract, whose grand-daughter was married to Vanbrugh.

[1] This 'moral lecture,' as Leigh Hunt calls it, hardly possesses a plot. Learchus, in his admiration for Æsop, forces his daughter to bestow her hand upon the sage, who at the last moment renounces it in favour of her youthful lover. A succession of personages—including the country-gentleman Sir Polidorus Hogstye (Vanbrugh's own invention)—come to consult the ill-favoured old philosopher, who conveys his counsel by means of fables which he recites to them. Some of these are admirably versified; see *e.g.* that in i. 1, concerning the nightingale who would be a linnet till she

> 'Spoil'd her voice, she strain'd her throat,
> She did, as learned women do,
> Till every thing
> That heard her sing
> Would run away from her—as I from you.'

'Pray speak,' Æsop has previously remarked to Hortensia, to whom this fable is addressed, 'that you may be understood; language was designed for it, indeed it was.' The dialogue is altogether very light and amusing; see *e. g.* Learchus' defence of his tyrannical treatment of his daughter—'I speak as a father' (v. 1)—a passage with which Mr. J. L. Toole cannot have remained unacquainted. Part II of *Æsop*, added by Vanbrugh to the original, consists of three scenes only—the first being occupied with theatrical politics. The closing fable recited by the Beau to cap Æsop is a fair specimen of Vanbrugh's moral philosophy.

[2] *Ante*, p. 525.

serve to be ranked by the side, not of Congreve and Wycherley, but even of Vanbrugh. He seems to have given some attention to the theory as well as the practice of the comic drama [1], and to have had a keen eye towards finding new as well as familiar expedients for gratifying the public palate. He is happy in the description of manners in a wider range than that commanded by Vanbrugh; but his dialogue is in general less gay and sparkling, and while his morality is no better than that of the most reckless of his contemporaries, he has a coarseness of fibre which renders him less endurable than some of these are to a refined taste. The vivacity of his dramatic invention is however indisputable; and the freshness of mind which enabled him to widen the range of popular comedy in his last two plays entitles him to mention among the more distinguished authors of our later comic drama.

His merits and defects.

His earliest play, *Love and a Bottle* (1698), while very offensive in parts, and altogether coarse in treatment, is fluent rather than sparkling in its dialogue. In some degree this comedy recalls *The Plain-Dealer;* but the brutality of its hero is of a simpler kind [2]. Farquhar's idea of a hero, indicated already in this play [3], is more fully developed in his *The Constant Couple, or A Trip to the Jubilee* (1700) and its sequel *Sir Harry Wildair* (1701). Such plot as the former of these plays possesses Farquhar seems to have taken from a kind of scandalous novel in the authorship of which he had been himself concerned. It is however unnecessary to trace the adventures of Lady Lurewell either to their literary or to their probable historical source. Both plays doubtless derived their popularity from the character of Sir Harry Wildair, for which Farquhar [4] takes

Love and a Bottle (1698).

The Constant Couple, or A Trip to the Jubilee (1700).

[1] Leigh Hunt quotes from Farquhar's *Essay on Comedy;* but there is nothing very striking in the extract.

[2] About Leanthe (disguised as a page) there is nothing pathetic but her situation. The humour of the country-gull Mockmode, who after trying to learn fencing and dancing, and seeking the friendship of the poet Lyric (who burlesques Lee and tragedy in general), finally experiences a fate resembling that of Crowne's Sir Formal, is neither particularly fresh nor pleasing.

[3] '*Leanthe.* How charming would virtue look in him, whose behaviour can add a grace to the unseemliness of vice!' (iii. 1.)

[4] See the Dedication to *The Inconstant.*

credit with a kind of mock modesty. In this character, whatever scope it may have provided for lively acting, the element of utter impudence predominates over every other; nor is the manner of the impudence, to my mind, especially agreeable. *Sir Harry Wildair* is perhaps happier than the earlier play; but the design—which is that of showing the incorrigibility of the hero to be all but absolute[1]—is hardly bearable, and if bearable, is hardly comic. Parts of this play are however entertaining — Sir Harry's supposed brother (really his wife in disguise) is an amusing figure, supplying one of many illustrations of the view taken by the world of fashion and its mirror, the comic stage, of the university education of the age. But though the dialogue of this comedy is vivacious and occasionally witty[2], the whole—in spite of the close—is utterly bad in spirit, and an example of the degradation which the English comic drama had by this time reached. For *The Inconstant, or The Way to Win Him* (1703) Farquhar 'took the hint from Fletcher's *Wild-Goose-Chase*, and to those who say, that I have spoiled the original, I wish no other injury, but that they would say it again.' He has not equalled the pathos of his original; but his comedy is brisk and entertaining; and the fifth act (founded on fact) is a happy contrivance of his own. There was moreover some boldness in laying the scene in Paris; but the manners, such as they are, differ in no wise from those of the English comedy of this age in general; and Young

Sir Harry Wildair (1701).

The Inconstant, or The Way to Win Him (1703).

[1] His wife, supposed dead, appears to him as a ghost, without disturbing his equanimity. On her declaring herself alive, he is at first gently incredulous, but soon reconciles himself to his happiness, and concludes the play with 'the definition of a good wife, in the character of my own.'

[2] Lady Lurewell reappears in this play as the fashionable card-playing wife of the unfortunate Standard—or rather he appears as her husband ('you may have the honour,' says little Banter, 'of being called the lady's husband; but you will never find in any author, either ancient or modern, that she's called Mr. Standard's wife'). In accordance with the 'patriotic' tone observable in the comedy of this period, the French Marquis is a card-sharper: 'Fortune,' he says, 'give de Anglisman de riches, but nature give de Franceman de politique to correct de unequal distribution.' 'Monsieur le Marquis' must have been an ancestor of Lessing's 'le Chevalier Riccaut de la Marlinière, Seigneur de Pret-au-val, de la Branche de Prensd'or.'

Mirabel is a reproduction of Sir Harry Wildair. It is striking, that even an idea like that of *The Wild-Goose-Chase* should suffice to give, so to speak, more *body* to this play than most contemporary comedies possess.

The Twin Rivals (1705).

In the Preface to *The Twin Rivals* (1705) the author announces his intention to take advantage of the success of Collier's attack upon the theatre, so as to 'make the stage flourish by virtue of that satire by which' its assailant 'thought to suppress it.' Farquhar can however hardly be said to move very easily in his moral endeavour. This comedy is, to say the least, quite as coarse as anything he had previously written, while the virtuous characters are not very interesting. The notion of making the villain of the action a humpback is presumably a tribute to morality. Teague, the Irish servant, is fairly amusing. In *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) the author sought to break fresh ground. The comedy, dedicated 'to all friends round the Wrekin,' was intended as a sketch of country (Shropshire) manners, as well as of the humours of the Recruiting system. From both points of view the attempt was legitimate and novel, and gives a certain historical interest to the picture. But the comedy is as coarse as the lowest scenes in our eighteenth-century novels, and there is little to choose between Captain Plume and Sergeant Kite, and hardly more between the young ladies and the country wenches of Shropshire. In *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707) Farquhar achieved his master-piece. This comedy, justly the most celebrated of his plays and destined to an enduring life on the stage, deserved its success in the first instance by the cleverness of the plot, which is ingenious without being improbable. Some of the incidents indeed are dubious, including one at the close,—a separation by mutual consent, which throws a glaring light on the view taken by the author and his age of the sanctity of the marriage-tie. But the comedy is also an excellent picture of manners—the inn with its rascally landlord and highwaymen-guests and the country-house into which the Beau is carried in a fainting-fit are both lifelike pictures; and some of the characters are

The Recruiting Officer (1706).

The Beaux' Stratagem (1707).

drawn with much humour and spirit. The happiest is that of Archer, the Beau's friend who pretends to be his valet, but carries on adventures on his own account. This became one of Garrick's most famous parts; and indeed the easy volubility of the pretended servant furnishes an admirable opportunity[1] for a fine actor of light comedy—such as the English stage still possesses in one veteran artist. Altogether this play is written in the happiest of veins; and may be regarded as the prototype of Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, like which it hovers rather doubtfully on the borders—not always easy to determine—between comedy and farce.

Dramatists whose career extends beyond the reign of Anne.

Colley Cibber (1671–1757).

The three dramatic authors who remain to be mentioned all continued their literary activity beyond the beginning of the Georgian age of our history, so that only a part of it falls within the range of the present survey. COLLEY CIBBER[2] (1671–1757), whose *Apology for his Life* furnishes a useful view of a remarkable period of the history of the stage, gained applause on it as an actor before he made his first attempt as an author. His first play, *Love's Last Shift*, was produced in 1696; he afterwards became for a considerable time joint patentee and principal manager of Drury Lane—he was, as a satirist put it, Chancellor Cibber of the Court of Appeal for Authors, while his two colleagues sat only for form's sake; in 1730 he was appointed poet laureate; and in 1732 he retired from his connexion with the theatre, though he appeared as an actor as late as 1745. In the latter capacity he had gained great applause in his early days, particularly as a representative of fops; and it was a character of this description which forms the chief attraction—the first of a long series—in his earliest play. Of *Love's Last Shift, or The Fool in Fashion* (1696) Cibber acknowledges Congreve's criticism

His Love's Last Shift, or The Fool in Fashion (1696).

[1] See especially iii. 3, the scene to which the phrase 'brother Scrub' owes its origin.—This comedy likewise introduces an Irishman (a priest).

[2] *The Dramatic Works of Colley Cibber.* 4 vols., 1760.—My quotations from the *Apology* are taken from the second edition, 1740. An appreciative notice of this autobiography will be found in *The Retrospective Review*, vol. i. part ii.

to have been just, that 'it had only in it a great many things that were *like* wit, that in reality were *not* wit[1].' Already however in this comedy a moral purpose is to be recognised; indeed, the author attributes its enduring success to 'the moral delight received from its fable[2].' There is no reason to disbelieve the honesty of purpose which Cibber claims for himself as an author; he always wished, he says, 'to present the *utile dulci*' [*sic*], 'and to write nothing a man of probity could be ashamed of[3].' Passing by three comedies, *Woman's Wit, or The Lady in Fashion* (1697)—part of which was afterwards reproduced in *The Schoolboy* (1702)—*Love Makes a Man, or The Fop's Fortune* (1700), partly founded on Fletcher, and the brisk *She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not, or The Kind Impostor* (1703), taken from a Spanish source, as well as the commonplace tragedy in blank-verse, *Perolla and Izidora* (1706), which treats of an episode of the Second Punic War and is founded on Lord Orrery's novel of *Parthenissa*, we come to a comedy of indisputable excellence. No critic capable of discerning real merit ought to 'deny praise' to *The Careless Husband* (1704). In the Dedication to this play Cibber modestly avows his intention of seeking by example to reform the coarseness of contemporary comedy and to produce what may be fit entertainment for People of Quality, 'especially the Ladies.' There are doubtless things in *The Careless Husband* which may seem out of harmony with this intention, and the principal situation would justly be resented by a modern audience. But the purpose of this play is genuinely moral—to exhibit the triumph of pure long-suffering affection when its object is a man not spoilt at heart. There is true pathos in the character of Lady Easy, and one may forgive her husband as one forgives Fielding's heroes, or Steele in actual life. It cannot be said that such a picture is an apology for vice, though it fails to treat vice from the loftiest of stand-points. The execution is upon the whole admirable; and the quarrels of Lady Betty Modish and Lord Morelove, with Lord Foppington and Lady Graveairs intervening, are in the best style of later English comedy.

Other earlier plays (1702).

The Careless Husband (1704).

[1] *Apology*, p. 179. [2] *Ib.* [3] *Ib.* p. 218.

Lady Betty in particular is a most delightful coquette—*with a heart;* and the Lord Foppington of this play, who is not a mere *replica* of Vanbrugh's developement of Cibber's Sir Novelty, is one of the best easy-going fools ever invented[1].

The Lady's Last Stake, or The Wife's Resentment (1707).

The Lady's Last Stake, or The Wife's Resentment (1707) is a kind of *pendant* to *The Careless Husband*, its moral being the maxim that it is by love and not by angry jealousy that a wife should keep her husband to her side. Though the play is good of its kind, and the under-plot of the triumph of Mrs. Conquest over her rival, whether or not original, amusing, yet this comedy is not equal to its predecessor; and it must be allowed that Cibber's social philosophy, though well-intentioned and certainly on the side of morality, is not of a very robust character. We are already approaching the age of sentimental comedy.

The remaining plays produced by Cibber in this period being chiefly adaptations, call for no notice[2].

Mrs. Centlivre (1678 *circ.*–1722).

Of the numerous plays of *Mrs. Centlivre*[3] (1678 *circ.*–1722) the great majority were produced before the death of

[1] After carrying on a desperate flirtation with Lady Betty, he willingly resigns her to her lover, merely observing: 'I am struck dumb with the Deliberation of her Assurance; and do not positively remember that the *Non-Chalence* of my Temper ever had so bright an Occasion to shew itself before.' His phraseology has a few flowers to add to those decorating the speech of his namesake, 'sun-burn me,' &c. When invited by Lady Betty to fall foul of 'everything that is not Gallant and Fashionable,' he is 'transported;' 'for if ever I was oblig'd to Nature for any tolerable Qualification, 'twas positively the Talent of being exuberantly pleasant upon this subject.'

[2] They include *Richard III* (1700); cf. vol. i. pp. 289, 307; *The Double Gallant, or The Sick Lady's Cure* (1707), made up, as Cibber confesses in his *Apology* (p. 274), 'of what little was tolerable in two or three others,' and soon laid aside as 'poetical lumber;' and *The Comical Lovers* (1707), which consisted (see *Apology*, p. 275) of 'the Comic Scenes of Dryden's *Marriage à la Mode* and of his *Maiden Queen*' put together. *Xerxes* (1699) is not included in my edition.—As to the most celebrated of Cibber's later plays, *The Non-Juror*, cf. *ante*, p. 541, note 1. Cibber's alterations of Shakspere furnished Fielding with a subject of satire in his *The Historical Register* for the year 1736, where Cibber appears under the name of Ground-Ivy: '*King John* as now writ will not do—But a word in your ear, I will make him do.' (iii. 2.)

[3] *The Dramatic Works of the celebrated Mrs. Centlivre, with a New Account of her Life.* (Reprint.) 3 vols., 1872.—Her maiden name was Susanna Freeman.

Queen Anne, but a very few words will suffice with regard to them.

The Perjur'd Husband, or The Adventures of Venice (1700).

Her first dramatic effort was a tragedy in blank-verse, *The Perjur'd Husband, or The Adventures of Venice* (1700); but she only once returned to this branch of composition, which lay outside the range of her talents. Her early tragedy has no touch of poetry, but is fairly successful in the conduct of a sufficiently straightforward action[1].

Characteristics of her comedies.

Her comedies, whether original or not,—for several of them borrow their plots from foreign sources[2],—have all an unmistakeable family likeness. Their authoress needed no indulgence on the score of her sex as a playwright; for there is not a dramatist among her contemporaries who better understood the construction of light comic actions, and the use of those conventional figures of comedy which always commend themselves to the mirth of a popular audience. As she had no hesitation in resorting to the broadest expedients of farce, she was sure of the immediate effect which was all her ambition desired, for she never flattered herself, as she confesses, 'that anything she was capable of doing, could support the Stage[3].' In one instance however she virtually invented a character of really novel humour; and in another she devised one to which it only needed the genius of a

[1] A wife in disguise kills her rival; the husband by mistake kills the wife; and the lover of the rival kills the husband. The comic under-plot, though praised by Geneste, seems to me commonplace.—Mrs. Centlivre's other tragedy, *The Cruel Gift*, was not produced till 1716. The terrific situation of the last act, which is seemingly to some extent the same as the climax of the old play of *Tancred and Gismunda* (cf. vol. i. p. 117), is unexpectedly solved, and all ends happily.

[2] Thus *The Gamester* (1705) is a prose version of Jean-François Regnard's comedy of *Le Joueur* (printed in Jules Janin's *Chefs d'Œuvre Dramatiques du XVIII^me^ Siècle*, vol. i), to which therefore the merit of the effective plot belongs. The gambling-scene, which is vigorously realistic, is however original; and the Marquis is turned by Mrs. Centlivre (a good Whig) into a patriotic caricature of a supposed Frenchman.—In *Love's Contrivance, or Le Médecin Malgré Lui* (1703) 'some scenes I confess are partly taken from Molière.'—Of *The Perplex'd Lovers* (1712) 'most of the plot' is avowedly taken from a Spanish play; *The Stolen Heiress, or The Salamanca Doctor Outwitted* (1702) and the excellent comedy of *The Wonder* (1714) were likewise very probably derived from Spanish originals.

[3] Preface to *The Man's Bewitch'd.*

great actor to give enduring life on the boards. Marplot in *The Busy-Body* and Don Felix in *The Wonder* are creations upon which any comic dramatist might have looked back with satisfaction; and to the former indeed Mrs. Centlivre appeals as a real title to popular favour[1]. As a rule however her characters are little more than thin outlines which it is left to the actor to fill up. This applies particularly to those of her comedies which are little more than pictures of manners. Such is *The Beau's Duel, or A Soldier for the Ladies* (1704), in which we are introduced to Sir William Mode, one of the fops in whom the comedy of this period abounds, distinguished only by a few novelties in the way of asseverations, such as 'enfeeble me!' There is more fun in the character of Ogle, who 'fancies every Body is in Love with him;' and the duel between the pair (ii. 5) is a good bit of farce. The freshest personage in the piece is however at the same time the least respectable—for Mrs. Plotwell is evidently drawn from life. The plot of *The Basset-Table* (1706) hardly deserves the name; but the characters, though mere sketches, together make up an entertaining group; among them Lady Reveller, who turns night into day, and keeps the basset-table at which she is ready to ruin her acquaintances—Mrs. Sago, the doting druggist's wife, in particular; and Valeria, who is an F.R.S. in petticoats, but has feelings to spare for a lover as well as for a *lumbricus laetus*. In *Love at a Venture* (1706), on the other hand, the plot is happy—turning on the impudence of an admirer of the fair sex in general, who in order to carry on his courtship of two ladies at the same time, pretends to be two gentlemen at once, and engages in a third intrigue into the bargain. But the characters are here also the ordinary figures of contemporary comedy. In *The Busy-Body* (1709) and its continuation, *Marplot in Lisbon* (1710),

The Beau's Duel, or A Soldier for the Ladies (1704).

The Basset-Table (1706).

Love at a Venture (1706).

The Busy-Body (1709), and

[1] See the Prologue to the same comedy:

'Tho' here and there, a Scene should fail to take,
Yet spare her for the Busy-Body's sake.'

The Man's Bewitch'd (1709) is a farcical comedy in some degree resembling *The Beaux' Stratagem* of Farquhar, but far inferior to it.

we have, as already suggested, an original character of genuine humour; for Marplot differs from Mar-All and from his original, the hero of Molière's *L'Étourdi*, by committing a succession of exploits in action as well as in speech. He is the parent of that undying favourite of the modern stage, Paul Pry[1], and some of his unexpected apparitions—especially one down the chimney—are irresistibly ludicrous. Among Mrs. Centlivre's other plays, so far as they fall within the period of the survey, I need only once more mention *The Wonder, or A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714), of which the plot is a happily-contrived situation, familiar to the later stage, in which the jealous suspicion of a lover is excited by the concealment in the house of the lady of a fair friend whose admirer he mistakes for a rival. The struggle between love and jealousy in Don Felix, as well as his ready subservience to Violante's most daring device, furnished Garrick with the materials for one of his greatest successes. Of Mrs. Centlivre's later comedies, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718) is remembered on account of the indignity to which in it 'the real Simon Pure' is subjected by the assumption of his name and character by the ruthless Colonel Fainwell; and the farce of *A Gotham Election* (1715) is worth mentioning as a dramatic illustration of a phase of English life which was henceforth unfortunately for long to become one of our 'national institutions[2].'

Marplot in Lisbon (1710).

The Wonder, or A Woman Keeps a Secret (1714).

Later plays.

Mrs. Centlivre's dialogue is fluent and easy rather than sparkling; and of wit she displays few traces. In expression as in the contrivance of situations she habitually sinks to the lowest level of our post-Restoration drama, exhibiting no trace of sympathy with the better and purer tone which was gradually gaining ground in English comedy. That in her latest play, *The Artifice* (1722), there should be a slight element of sentimental comedy in the blank-verse spoken by the injured Louisa, is a pure concession to fashion. The moral tone of this authoress

Mrs. Centlivre's position as a comic dramatist.

[1] 'Nay 'tis only I, Colonel; don't be angry, you forgot your Snuff-box; and I thought you would want it; so I brought it you, that 's all, Sir,' &c.

[2] The subject was again treated by Fielding in his *Pasquin* (1736).

is not a whit superior to that of the notorious Astraea herself.

It is therefore doubly pleasant, as I closed the list of the tragic poets of this age with the name of Addison, to be able to close that of the writers of comedy with another name worthy of the association it will always retain with his. Of the work which Addison and his faithful friend SIR RICHARD STEELE[1] (1671–1729) carried on hand in hand, which may without exaggeration be described as an endeavour to correct the manners, and with them the morals, of the age, Steele's plays furnish abundant evidence[2]. In his Dedication of them to the Duchess of Hamilton, he declares that 'in writing Plays, not to displease such whose Minds are filled with the worthiest Ideas of what is Laudable in real Life, is much more than to escape the Censure of such as are more inclined to observe the Conduct of the characters, as they are part of a Dramatic Entertainment.' He is in short, in his plays as in everything else he composed, a designedly moral writer; and the occasional licences of expression he permits himself furnish a good test of how much in the manners of the comedy of this period must be attributed to the man, and how much to the age. The resolution which in the Preface to one of his plays[3] he announces of counteracting the evil tendency of the stage 'to draw Occasion of Mirth from those Images which the Religion of our Country tells us we ought to tremble at with Horror,' he steadfastly pursues; and here as elsewhere he devotes his talents to the service of Virtue, and abhors what is lascivious and profane. His humour is both gay and fresh, though in his plays it is at times rather thin; and he is by no means averse from warm

Sir Richard Steele (1671–1729).

His moral purpose.

His humour.

His politics.

[1] *The Dramatic Works of Sir Richard Steele, Knt.* 1760.

[2] See the Dedication of *The Tender Husband* to Addison: 'I should not offer it to you as such' (*i. e.* as 'no improper memorial of an inviolable Friendship'), 'had I not been very careful to avoid every thing that might look ill-natur'd, immoral or prejudicial to what the better Part of Mankind hold Sacred and Honourable.'

[3] *The Lying Lover.*

political partisanship—in fact there is no mistaking him for what he was, not only a good patriot, but a strong warlike Whig.

Steele the real founder of Sentimental Comedy.

In pursuing the aims of which he never allowed himself to lose sight, Steele however as a dramatist came to mistake the means which comedy should employ. His comic genius lacked sustained vigour; and thus he as it were became conscious of his inability to satisfy his moral purpose by holding up to ridicule the vices and follies which are the proper subjects of comedy. He called in sentiment to the aid of humour; and taking a hint from Colley Cibber who so well understood the public taste, became the real founder of that *Sentimental Comedy* which exercised so pernicious an influence upon the progress of our dramatic literature. It would be unjust to hold him responsible for the feebleness of successors who were altogether deficient in the comic power which he undoubtedly even as a dramatist exhibits; but in so far as their aberrations were the result of his example, he must be held to have contributed, though with the best of motives, to the decline of the English drama, and in particular of that branch of it to which his plays after all essentially belong.

The Funeral, or Grief à-la-Mode (1702).

The Funeral, or Grief à-la-Mode (1702) has a good intrigue, and is written with vivacity. Lady Harriot is a pleasant picture of a pure merry-hearted girl; and the honest steward Mr. Trusty is the first of a series of characters which became familiar to the stage and of which Sheridan's Rowley is the best-known example. There are also at least two scenes of broad humour—that introducing the ragged soldiers in act iv, and the scene in the last act, where the widow prepares for the funeral of her late lamented husband, while her friend Tattleaid administers consolation after her kind, with her mouth full of pins[1]. Already in this comedy the sentiment is

[1] 'Hark ye, Hussey,' is the Widow's request to her friend, 'if you should outlive me, as I hope you won't, take care I an't buried in Flannel, 'twould never become me, I'm sure.' Pope adapted this allusion to the cruel statute 30 Charles II, cap. 3, in a well-known passage of his *Moral Essays*. The

a little obtrusive, but not to the same extent as in Steele's later plays[1].

The Lying Lover, or The Ladies' Friendship (1703).

Steele's next comedy, *The Lying Lover, or The Ladies' Friendship* (1703) announces itself as 'a stranger on the stage; his sire de Vega'—but it was in truth taken from Corneille, who in his turn had borrowed the idea of his play from another Spanish dramatist, not Lope[2]. Young Bookwit (Corneille's Dorante and Foote's Young Wilding) is therefore not an original character. He is however too entertaining a type to be too narrowly scrutinised in any respect; and the final cause of the character almost seems to be its suitability to the genius of an English actor of our own times.

The serious portion of the plot[3] of *The Lying Lover* is Steele's own invention, and renders this play remarkable as the first instance of Sentimental Comedy proper. The mistake is here committed of showing distrust in the means by which Comedy works, and seeking to produce an effect not by making vice and folly ridiculous, but by moving compassion. The intention is praiseworthy; but the distrust which it implies in the sufficiency within its own range of Comedy's proper means announces the approaching extinction of true Comedy in our dramatic literature.

The Tender Husband, or The Accomplished Fools (1705).

The moral of *The Tender Husband, or The Accomplish'd Fools* (1705) is one congenial enough to its author, although *The Careless Husband* of Cibber, acted in the previous year, had probably suggested its employment as a dramatic motive. In Steele's comedy, the maxim that love lies at the root of duty, and that all

statute is referred to as 'the woollen act' in the Prologue to Dryden and Lee's *Œdipus*.

[1] The Preface to *The Funeral* should not be overlooked; the comment on W. W. the embalmer's advertisement is as good of its kind as anything in *The Tatler*.

[2] The original of Corneille's *Menteur* was Ruiz de Alarcon's *Verdad Sospechosa;* but Corneille at first thought this play to be by Lope. (Cf. Ticknor, ii. 335.) *Le Menteur* had been translated already in 1661 under the title of *The Mistaken Beauty, or The Liar.* Foote likewise professed to have taken his *The Lyar* (1762) from Lope de Vega; he had certainly seen Steele's comedy. (Cf. Geneste, iv. 649.)

[3] It is marked off from the rest by being written in blank-verse.

other principles will fail successfully to govern domestic relations, is pleasantly, though rather thinly, worked out. The character of Miss Biddy—as to her own unceasing satisfaction she is named, being a worshipper of the heroes of romance, 'Philocles, Artaxerxes, Oroondates and the rest of the Heroick Lovers'—is very entertaining[1].

The last of Steele's comedies, *The Conscious Lovers*, was not produced till 1722, and therefore falls outside the limits of this survey. In it we already have a comedy of which the main interest is sentimental—the story of Indiana and of Bevil's virtuous love for her might have served as a subject for Ilfland or for Kotzebue[2]. But though Steele was thus directing dramatic literature into a path certain to end in artificiality and weakness, his last play like its predecessors—and like everything he wrote—shows how consistently he laboured as a man of letters in the task of his life—to do honour to virtue without doing violence to nature. Steele and Addison[3] were in truth the champions who overthrew the shameless immorality which had so long flaunted its insolent attractions on the surface of English society, and which might in

The Conscious Lovers (1722).

Consistency between Steele and Addison's plays and their essays.

[1] She desires, like Lydia Languish in *The Rivals*, to be wooed and won in something out of the humdrum way. 'I am almost of Opinion, that had Oroondates been as pressing as Clerimont, *Cassandra* had been but a pocket-book. It looks so ordinary, to go out at a Door to be married—Indeed, I ought to be taken out of a Window, and run away with.' (Act iv.)

[2] Young Mr. Bevil is a hero deserving of the highest respect, and his resistance to the temptation of fighting a duel with his friend (for the sake of which episode Steele declares the whole play to have been written) is a brave protest on the part of the author against a vicious and senseless practice. But now and then the virtuous gentleman approaches the borders of priggishness, as when he bows the music-master to the door, and subsequently explains to the admiring Indiana his desire to do honour to superior talent in an inferior position. Old Humphrey is the standing figure of the trusty old family servant; on the other hand, there is real freshness and humour—without the least touch of impropriety—in the loves of Tom (Bevil's servant) and Phillis (Lucinda's maid). Tom's description of their Pyramus-and-Thisbe sorrows while he was cleaning the windows outside and she in, is in Steele's happiest manner.

[3] Readers of Fielding will remember Parson Adams' opinion of Steele's last comedy and its distinguished tragic contemporary: 'I never heard of any plays fit for a Christian to read, but *Cato* and *The Conscious Lovers;* and, I must own, in the latter there are some things almost solemn enough for a sermon.'

the end have destroyed the strength of its vital parts. If in their plays at all events these writers respectively retained a little of the affectation of Heroic Virtue and of the licence of Restoration mirth, this circumstance need not be held to detract from the consistency of their dramatic efforts with those of their productions which signally helped to mature another literary growth,—the inheritor of much that had been healthy and generous and national in the English drama.

Concluding remarks on the later Stuart drama.

We have seen in what respects and to what degree the English drama had before the period of the Civil War declined from the height to which it had been raised by the great masters of earlier days. When it had once more recovered possession of that arena with which no living drama can dispense, it would have been futile to expect that our dramatists should return altogether into the ancient paths, unaffected by the influences, native and foreign, in operation around them. The contemporaries of the Restoration were at once too far removed in time from the great Elisabethans, and too near them, for such an attempt to have been possible on their part. They were moreover—in some respects for good, in more for evil—too conscious of the necessity of maintaining a connexion between the drama and the existing currents of literature and society to be willing to engage in any attempt to archaise their form of art. This attempt it was left to a much later period of our literature to make, when the Romantic School consciously essayed either to bridge or to leap the gulf.

Conditions under which it might have become a legitimate developement of the Elisabethan.

While, however, an absolute return to the past was out of the question, there was no reason why a legitimate developement should not be hoped and striven for. Had the Restoration drama and that of the ensuing period been in true sympathy with the Elisabethan, this would not have been impossible. But in this case the new drama would also have had to be in sympathy with those qualities in the Elisabethan which had formed part of its very life and being,—to be true in spirit if not in the letter to the higher purposes of the dramatic art, to the

nobler tendencies of the national life, and to the eternal demands of moral law. Because, while following its own courses, our dramatic literature in the later Stuart period was as a whole untrue to these, and only partially returned from the aberrations to which in one or the other direction it had condemned itself, its history is that of a decay no brilliancy, either borrowed or original, can conceal.

The later Stuart drama untrue to these conditions.

Owing in part no doubt to the influence of the French theatre, the separation between tragedy and comedy become so marked in our post-Restoration drama, that the style and manner of a play as a rule of themselves suffice to determine the branch to which it claims to belong. Indeed, this separation is even more emphatic in the English than in the French drama itself, where the same metrical form serves for tragedy and for the higher kind of comedy, while our comic dramatists almost uniformly confine themselves to the use of prose[1]. And it is significant that when, towards the close of the period under review, an attempt is made to introduce into comedy an element of sentiment—and morality—to which she had long been a stranger, the use of verse simultaneously endeavours to assert itself. But throughout the earlier part of this period the mixed species which combines tragic with comic scenes is but little cultivated; and tragedy gathers her robes around her with a more self-conscious fear of their coming into contact with the flying skirts of her sister. Otway, both when he pilfered from[2] and when he most nearly approached[3] the Elisabethan drama, adopted its practice in this respect, and Crowne likewise.

Marked separation between tragedy and comedy.

It therefore seemed in general admissible to consider the progress of tragedy and that of comedy in this period apart from one another, though the influences to which they

[1] Except of course in the case of the couplets which, as Mr. Trapwit would say, 'inculcate a particular moral at the end of every act.' — The single instance of a comedy in (blank) verse in this period is, so far as I know, Crowne's *The Married Beau* (*ante*, p. 542).

[2] In *Caius Marius*.

[3] In *Venice Preserved*, though the expression in the text is not intended to apply to the despicable comic passages in this tragedy.

were subjected were necessarily in many cases identical; and the same course may be pursued in these few concluding observations. The successive phases through which English tragedy passed in the time from the Restoration to the death of Queen Anne cannot always be kept distinct from one another; and it would be quite futile to attempt to do so by the guidance of the theories and principles at different times professed by the several dramatists. Following the example of Corneille, they eagerly sought to come before the public as masters of the theory of their art as well as of its practice. From Dryden and Howard to Granville and Congreve we have a constant succession of critic-dramatists, not to mention writers such as Rymer[1] and Dennis, whose fame—or notoriety—as critics has completely overshadowed the memory of their efforts as writers of plays. But while announcing, in forms variously modified, their adherence to this or that principle of dramatic construction or execution, while declaring in favour of the Unity of Action, or indicating the extent to which they would allow themselves to depart from the Unity of Time or of Place, the dramatists were in general only seeking to reconcile the exigences of literary taste and fashion with the demands and traditions of the national genius. The former pointed to foreign models; but as it was impossible to follow these implicitly, at all events in the first instance, there were introduced, and to some extent maintained for a time, what Sir Walter Scott[2] seems justified in calling 'certain romantic whimsical limitations of the dramatic art.' But a steadfast adherence to principles, or even to the semblance of principles, was as little the order of the day in the literary as in the political world; and the influence of the old masters of the national

Summary of the history of tragedy in this period.

Critical theories not consistently followed by their authors.

[1] Thomas Rymer (1641 *circ.*–1713) has been already mentioned (vol. i. p. 292) as a critic of Shakspere. Before *A Short View of Tragedy* there characterised, he published (in 1692) a critical Letter on *The Tragedies of the last Age*. A brief notice of these works will be found in *The Retrospective Review*, vol. i. part i. (1820); for some further particulars as to the earlier of them, and of Rymer's Heroic Tragedy of *Edgar, or The English Monarch* (printed 1678), see Geneste, i. 218 *seqq.*

[2] In his *Essay on the Drama*, first published in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

drama never wholly died out. So long as any dramatic power remained in our tragic poets, the struggle between fashion and instinct could never wholly determine itself in favour of the former; in the end an artificial phase of style gained an empty victory; the 'first reasonable English tragedy' was produced; and with *Cato* the national tragic drama stoically commited suicide.

The more clearly distinguishable of the phases referred to in the history of English tragedy in the period of its decay have been sufficiently illustrated in the preceding pages. By the King's command, the loyal Lord Orrery set up the standard of Heroic Plays, round which the brilliant example of Dryden for a time rallied the efforts of contemporary tragic poets. The new species—for such it pretended to be—commended itself by its novel choice of themes, to a large extent supplied by recent French romance, and by its novel garb of rhyme, likewise re-introduced into the English drama from France. But the themes which might seem of their nature inexhaustible to that most patient of publics—the readers of novels—could not long suffice to satisfy theatrical audiences, of however limited a class; and the form, in the application it was sought to enforce for it, was doomed to remain an exotic. Dryden at first claimed for the English tragic muse the right to combine her native inheritance of freedom with these foreign acquisitions. Subsequently, undismayed by the satire which had seized upon the extravagances of the new style together with other materials ready to hand, rather than upon the pretended principles of the new style itself, he again insisted upon the superior freedom which according to his view it permitted; and all but anticipated in earnest the mock boast supplied by 'a friend' to Fielding's tragic poet, that the muse

Heroic plays.

Developement of the species by Dryden.

> 'can make what ne'er was made before:
> Can search the realms of Fancy, and create
> What never came into the brain of Fate[1].'

But while the foremost tragic poet thus summoned Tragedy to rival the wonders (without disdaining the machinery) of

[1] *Pasquin* (act iii).

Opera, the moral sameness of the tragic themes and of the sentiments round which those themes revolved inevitably led in the same direction as the rhymed form to which 'heroic plays' had condemned themselves. This direction was, bluntly expressed, a desire for change. In the last of his most noteworthy disquisitions on the tragic drama we found Dryden once more seeking to reconcile the supposed demands of dramatic theory with his dramatic instincts; while at the same time he endeavoured to give expression to his views by essaying to rival Shakspere on his own ground. But though he after this produced one or two works noteworthy as efforts in tragic characterisation, he was in truth already growing weary of the stage itself as well as of the rhymed heroic drama; and though he put an end to that species, he failed to point the way effectively to a healthy new developement of English tragedy.

Lee.

Of the other tragic poets of this period, Lee had been subject to the same influences as Dryden. Like Dryden, he allowed political partisanship to intrude upon the stage —but to this I need not again advert. In the outward form of his tragedies he accommodated himself to Dryden's practice; the rhetorical character of his genius made him even less capable of cultivating his art in broader and freer growths, but its energy raises him above the level of a mere imitator.

Otway.

Otway, the most gifted tragic poet of the younger generation contemporary with Dryden, brought back into English tragedy a breath of the Elisabethan days. In addition to a keen insight into the dramatic excellence of themes, he possessed a real gift of tragic pathos; but he lacked that which genius itself can rarely spare, and his efforts were as incomplete as his end was premature.

Decline of tragedy.

Neither Southerne nor Rowe, nor any of their contemporaries, are worthy of being compared to Lee and Otway; to Congreve's solitary tragedy one is tempted to apply an emblem of Quarles', 'Tinnit—inane est;' and thus the English tragic drama could no longer rely on itself for the determination of its future course. Rymer was not the man to determine it by his canons of criticism; but these were in accordance with other influences of a

wider significance. The excesses of the past period of the English drama had, as will be more especially noted with reference to comedy, produced their inevitable reaction; the Sovereigns who followed upon the Revolution had exercised such influence as they possessed over society and literature in the direction of order and decorum; the offences of the stage had been exposed with force and spirit by a clerical censor; and elsewhere, while De Foe was inculcating the lessons of a sound homespun morality in hundreds of pamphlets, Steele and Addison were bringing about an alliance between good manners and good morals. Influences such as these will, in the absence of genius—which takes its own course and finds its own style,—always operate in favour of a style willing to bind itself by rules and to exercise a vigilant control over licence and even over freedom of manner. French tragedy—under the influence of not wholly dissimilar causes—had itself sacrificed much of its earlier vigour and passion in favour of qualities more acceptable to the 'reformed' Court of Lewis XIV. Such a model might well commend itself to Addison's tranquil hand; and the transition, if transition it can be called, was easy from Rowe to Addison. Hesitatingly he allowed his revised College exercise to take its chance upon the stage. Dennis might cavil, but Voltaire approved; and though 'some senseless trifling tales, as that of *Othello*,' might still continue 'impiously to assume the sacred name of Tragedy[1],' though Rowe and Addison themselves might contribute, in their generation, towards vindicating the honour of the greatest of the Elisabethans, and though so long as the stage endured hope was not wholly extinct,—as a literary growth English national tragedy was dead.

Extinction of English national tragedy as a literary growth.

'For modern comedy,' says the critic who so loudly deplored the aberrations of English tragedy from the Aristotelian rules, 'doubtless our English are the best in the world;' and so far as the dramatic literature of this age is concerned, there can be no question but that from

Comedy.

[1] Rymer.

Its contact with the times.

a purely literary point of view the sum-total of its comic works must be placed far above that of its tragic. It was impossible that comedy should in the same degree as tragedy seek to cut itself off from its native soil in an age whose tendencies and manners furnished to the former so promising a stock of subjects. The dominant reaction against Puritanism could find no more direct and facile expression than in the productions of the comic stage; and in proportion as the times were poor in imaginative genius, and out of sympathy with many ideal currents of thought and sentiment which experience seemed to have proved to be illusions, English comedy became more and more a drama of real life. Different styles indeed continued even here to find representatives in different writers. The spirit of the old romantic comedy had long ago fled; the airy fancies of Shakspere could not inspire to similar flights in so gross an atmosphere; even such an imitation as Suckling's *Goblins* found no imitators; even the graceful artificialities of the pastoral drama could not—except here and there in a translation—be revived in an age which had learnt to laugh at the shepherds of Arcadia as the age of Cervantes had learnt to laugh at Amadis de Gaul [1]. The very mask was no longer a species of Court entertainment capable of competing with more simply sensuous attractions; it has been seen how little of poetry remained in an isolated endeavour like Crowne's *Calisto*. The attempts of Shadwell and one or two others in the direction of poetic comedy were neither uniformly original, nor otherwise worthy of a more than passing notice; what elements of this description admitted of being combined with the comic drama were absorbed by the opera and the ballet, on which there is no reason further to dwell.

Extinction of romantic comedy and cognate species.

Licence of political comment.

No new species of the comic drama proper formed itself in this period, though towards its close may be noticed the beginnings of modern English farce. The introduction of elements of political and religious partisanship had no material influence upon the progress of comedy as a

[1] See an account in *The Retrospective Review*, vol. vii. part ii, of *The Extravagant Shepherd* ('a *Don Quixote* of pastoral poetry') published in 1654.

literary species, though their admission was not of a nature beneficially to affect its course. Soon after the close of this period comedy was to venture upon an unprecedented degree of licence in this direction, and thereby to bring about a legislation for the partial control of the stage which was well warranted by sound principles of government, and which in the interests of the drama as well as of the public requires to be extended rather than repealed.

English and foreign comedy.

With the help of Spanish and French plays, to which they continued to resort through the whole of this period, our dramatists found little difficulty in obtaining the materials for comic plots, and in varying the figures on which they concentrated their chief comic efforts. But they generally found that the complicated Spanish plots, whether simplified or not, required to be supported by characters of native English directness, and that a single French plot would not serve for an effective English comedy. At the same time the higher efforts of French comedy of character, as well as the refinement of expression in the best of their models, were alike accommodated to the robuster appetites and the grosser tastes of their patrons. They often succeeded, as they almost invariably boasted to have done, in strengthening the borrowed texture of their plays; and never added comic humour without at the same time adding coarseness of their own. Yet even thus the true vigour of English comedy might have remained unimpaired, had these authors remembered that so long as they essayed the task of exposing the follies and the ridiculous vices even of a particular age, they could not dispense with a moral standard of which the best of that age had not lost the consciousness. Such a writer as Shadwell had caught something not only of the art, but of the spirit of Ben Jonson; but Shadwell in most of his works was like the rest of his earlier contemporaries, and like the brilliant group which succeeded them, usually content to take his tone of moral sentiment from the reckless sphere of society for which he wrote. This absence of moral purpose is the true cause of the failure of our post-Restoration comic dramatists as a body to satisfy the

Prevailing immorality of English comedy.

demands which are to be made upon their art. They essayed to draw character as well as to paint manners, but they rarely proved equal to the former and higher task of comedy; and while choosing the means which most readily commend the comic drama to the favour of its immediate public, they achieved but little as interpreters of those more essential distinctions of human nature which their art is capable of illustrating.

It is true that the moral purpose of which I speak is necessary neither to a romantic fancy nor to a mere farce. Both of these are built on a basis of unreality, and may freely eschew all reference to the moral laws which govern the actual world,—may even if they choose assume these laws in an inverted form. But such a licence can least of all be conceded to that species of comedy which seeks to exhibit men not only as they are, but as they are in the particular time and in the particular country in which the public addressed lives and has its being. The least tenable of the apologies which have been or may be contrived for the Restoration comedy is that of Charles Lamb, which was sufficiently answered by Macaulay [1]. In our own days, when one sees grave men and apparently irreproachable matrons complacently lending their countenance to theatrical scenes at least as intolerable as any in Wycherley or Vanbrugh, one might feel inclined to believe in the existence of that imaginary dramatic atmosphere for which Lamb contended in the case of his clients, and to allow the latter the benefit of the analogy. But no such assumption will bear examination. Wantonness on the stage is a sure sign of a harmony between the stage and its patrons; and of dramatic literature it may be said, as Ben Jonson says of literature in general, 'There cannot be one colour of the mind, another of the wit... So that we may conclude wheresoever manners and fashions are corrupted, language is. *It imitates the public riot*[2].' And in truth, we know only too well that the public for which Dryden and his contemporaries, and Congreve and his, wrote their comedies

This immorality not unreal.

[1] See his Essay on *The Comic Dramatists of the Restoration.*

[2] *Discoveries (De Corruptelâ Morum).*

had good reason to recognise in what it saw and heard on the comic stage a faithful representation of what it did and said itself. Take for instance the view of marriage as propounded by Restoration comedy, and the view of marriage which was beginning to find favour in the Restoration age and which passed current in the next. On the stage poor Lord Malepert complains, 'But that 'tis not the fashion to be fond of one's Wife, I verily believe I could say a great many soft things to her[1];' and 'the very scribblescrabbles of the city have,' we hear, 'got into the way of despising their wives[2].' In the world outside, society was, to borrow the words of a French critic, fast falling into the same 'bizarre condition' and into the same 'strange aberration of ways of thought.' Marriage was coming to be deemed an institution not without its uses—as a cloak for sin[3].

Anti-theatrical publications.

There is no necessity to enter into illustrations of the indictment which already in its own days was brought against the later Stuart comedy, which its foremost representatives were either unwilling or unable to repel, and which no kindly sophistry or inopportune leniency of later days will succeed in invalidating. In the course of this work reference has been made to many assaults which at various times it was the fate of the English stage to undergo at the hands of self-constituted censors. None of them—not even *Histriomastix* itself—was delivered with so much force, was based on grounds so difficult to dispute, and was attended with so visible an effect, as Jeremy Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, published in 1698. This was not the first attempt in this age to protest against an evil to which no thinking man could shut his eyes. Little importance is, however, to be attached to Sir Richard Blackmore's endeavour to cure the public taste for immoral plays by means of moral epics—in the first instance by his *Prince Arthur* (1695), which he prefaced by an invective against

Jeremy Collier and his predecessors.

[1] Southerne's *The Maid's Last Prayer* (1693), iv. 1.
[2] Rowe's *The Biter*, i. 1.
[3] Cf. St.-Marc Girardin, *u. s.*, vol. v. sect. lxxiv.

stage-poets, among whom palpable allusion was made to Dryden. The City Poet followed up this attack at a later date in a *Satire upon Wit* (1699), which drew down upon him two contemptuous rejoinders from Dryden, mainly however confined to reflexions upon Blackmore's literary character[1]. But it was not by so ill-equipped a champion, nor by the interested cavils of a would-be literary rival such as Milbourne against a particular tendency of Dryden's dramatic satire[2], that the cause of a reformation of the drama asserted itself. It had found a champion of real mark in Jeremy Collier, of whose famous work it will be worth while to give a brief account in a note[3].

[1] See the Preface to Dryden's *Fables*, and the Prologue to *The Pilgrim* (where Blackmore is gibbeted as 'Quack Maurus'); and cf. Scott's *Life* of Dryden, in *Works*, i. 420 *seqq*. For Swift's catalogue of the works of the poet

'who ne'er was, or will be half read,
Who first sung Arthur, then sung Alfred,'—

see *ib*. viii. 445.

[2] Milbourne, in his *Notes on Dryden's Virgil* (to which he ventured to oppose a translation of his own), appears to have attacked Dryden for his abuse of priests. See Scott's *Dryden*, i. 403.

[3] Jeremy Collier states the object of his essay with naked simplicity: 'Being convinc'd that nothing has gone further in Debauching the Age than the Stage-Poets and Play-House, I thought I could not employ my Time better than by writing against them.' His diatribe divides itself into five parts—to which is added by way of appendix a view of the Opinion of the Pagans, of the Church, and State concerning the Stage. This display of learning may be passed by, as falling very far short of Prynne's, and contributing little to the more immediate purpose of the book. Unlike Prynne, Jeremy Collier had not shrunk from acquiring an intimate acquaintance with the subjects of his invective, and illustrated the charges which he brought against plays and playwriters by quotations and direct references. These charges comprise, firstly, the Immodesty of the Stage, which, as Collier argues, is a fault in behaviour as well as in religion. He asks how it comes to pass that those liberties which disoblige so much in conversation, should entertain upon the stage? He visits with particular censure the scandalous Prologues and Epilogues, which have not even the supposed justification of fiction. He rejects any appeal on the part of the comic dramatists to the examples of Plautus, in whom it is only the immodest characters who speak immodestly, while even these are Vestal Virgins as compared with the ladies of the modern stage,—or of Terence, whose general propriety he is justified in asserting. Aristophanes, though superior in some respects by reason of his abstinence from particular themes, condemns himself as an authority to be appealed to by the modern stage, for his scandalous liberty is accounted for by the fact that he is a downright atheist, while though his buffoonery is often too strong for his judgment, in his lucid intervals he condemns his own practice. (All this is miserably poor criticism, which may be com-

Effects of the Short View.

The force of much of Jeremy Collier's invective was irresistible; and when Dryden in attempting to meet the charge really admitted its substantial truth[1], it was plain that 'the

mended to the supporters of a recent theory as to Aristophanes' gradual lapse into irreligion.) Collier's remarks on the Elisabethan drama are sounder, though he here picks and chooses rather arbitrarily; but on the whole his first chapter sustains the double argument, that the immodesty of the modern stage is intolerable, and that no precedent can be found for it.

The Second Chapter, on 'The Profaneness of the Stage,' is more open to exceptions. Its first section, on 'Their Cursing and Swearing,' is not devoid of exaggerations, and occasionally suggests the defence 'I 'fac's no oath' (cf. *The Alchemist*, i. 1). In his second section, on 'Their Abuse of Religion and Holy Scripture,' Collier shows himself eager to accumulate doubtful evidence in addition to such as is indisputably in point.

The Third Chapter, 'The Clergy Abus'd by the Stage,' carries us into the range of personal as well as moral grievance; and though there is too much colour for the charge of a design on the part of the dramatists to bring the clergy as such into hatred and contempt (cf. *ante*, p. 459, note 2), it is always easier to suggest than to prove a charge of malice prepense. Colley Cibber therefore (*The Careless Husband*, act v) makes a happy rejoinder in observing that 'since the late short-sighted View of plays, Vice may go on and prosper, the Stage dares hardly shew a vicious Person speaking like himself, for fear of being call'd profane for exposing him. 'Tis hard indeed, when People won't distinguish between what's meant for Contempt, and what for Example.' The ground Collier here takes is therefore unsafe, though the suspicion which suggested this topic of attack cannot be described as a hallucination.

In the charge of the Fourth Chapter, that 'the Stage-Poets make their Principal Personages Vicious, and reward them at the End of the Play,' is bluntly expressed one of the chief moral sins of the dramatists of this period, which Dryden in the Preface to his *An Evening's Love* had in vain attempted sophistically to elude. It is a sin of which, as has been incidentally noted (*ante*, p. 88), our earlier drama had rarely made itself guilty; but from which, as the preceding review of plays has shown, it is impossible to acquit many of the dramatists of the later Stuart period. The chapter concludes with instances of the offences of the stage against good manners, the last of which—its audacious treatment of 'Quality'—will not strike most readers as greatly aggravating its guiltiness. Cowley had by anticipation answered something at least of the spirit of this charge when he contended (in the Preface to *Cutter of Coleman-Street*) that 'it has been the perpetual Priyilege of Satyre and Comedy, to pluck their Vices and Follies, though not their Persons, out of the Sanctuary of any Title.'

The Fifth Chapter, in fine, subjects four plays (Dryden's *Amphitryon* and *King Arthur*, D'Urfey's *Don Quixote*, and Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*) to a special comment to which the first and last of them at all events must be allowed to be peculiarly obnoxious.

The Conclusion, which adverts to the encouragement of vicious tendencies and manners by the stage in general, and points clearly to the remedy of its suppression, has no special importance for the history of the drama in this particular period.

[1] See the Epilogue to *The Pilgrim*. In the Preface to the *Fables* Dryden

parson,' whether or not he had 'stretch'd a point too far,' had hit the blot which he had desired to expose, and that, to whatever extent direct or incidental satire might assail him, his side, being that of Truth and Morality, could not but prevail in the end. The comic poets had always been more or less conscious of their sins[1], and now began with uneasy merriment to allude in their prologues to the reformation which had come over the spirit of the town[2]. Writers like Mrs. Centlivre became very anxious to reclaim their sinners with much emphasis in the fifth act; and Colley Cibber, while adopting the same easy process as a way out of dramatic as well as moral complications[3], may fairly be credited with the moral intention which he claims to have kept in view throughout his career as a dramatist.

Beginnings of sentimental comedy.

Steele pursued a still more definite moral purpose in his comedies; and though he mistook the proper task of comedy in seeking to elevate its ends, the purification of the manners and with them of the morals of the comic stage had now begun in earnest, and the social evil against which Jeremy Collier had contended had been virtually overcome.

Later growths of English comedy.

English comedy, unlike English tragedy, had still a future before it, which it forms no part of my present task to discuss. Both what was weakest and what was brightest in the English comedy of the eighteenth century may be viewed as a natural developement of phenomena

criticises Collier with tact and temper, admitting that 'in many things he has treated me justly,' but denying (and rightly denying) that he has 'judged impartially betwixt the former age and us,' and urging that 'he has lost ground at the latter end of the day by pursuing his point too far, like the Prince of Condé at Senneph; from immoral plays to no plays, *ab abusu ad usum, non valet consequentia.*'

[1] If proof of this were needed, one might point to passages where women are actually bantered for witnessing comedies by the comic writers themselves! The half-hypocritical prologues of earlier times, of which it may in general be said that they protest far too much, had long gone out of fashion—the age was in truth, in Wycherley's phrase, a 'frank' one.

[2] See the Prologue to Congreve's *The Way of the World;* Vanbrugh seems to allude to the same change in the Prologue to his *Æsop;* see also the Prologue to his *The False Friend.*

[3] See Scott's *Essay on the Drama* for some happy remarks on the Fifth Acts of these dramatists.

which have been noted in this chapter. Sentimental comedy begins with Steele, if not already with Colley Cibber, whose good intentions without their wit were inherited by Kelly and all the others who prided themselves on making the stage 'a school of morality[1].' Nor is there anything essentially new in the dramatic style of Fielding—even in his burlesques he is merely following in the footsteps of *The Rehearsal*, though the combination of political with literary satire is audaciously fresh; Goldsmith has a predecessor in Farquhar; and the most brilliant writer of later English comedy, Sheridan, is but the lineal successor of Congreve and the adapter of Vanbrugh. In the period from the Restoration to the death of Queen Anne our drama had achieved no master-pieces of comedy of character worthy to be placed by the side of those of Jonson and his contemporaries, or by the side of the noblest creations of Molière. It had however displayed a fertile capacity of adapting and modifying the favourite types of our own and of foreign schools of comedy; and if it had confined itself to a limited range in choosing its

Achievements of English comedy in this period.

> 'Ardentes juvenes, raptasque in amore puellas,
> Elusosque senes, agilesque per omnia servos[2]'—

yet it had extended the range of characters of affectation, and in one direction—from Etherege and Dryden to Vanbrugh and Cibber—had produced a type which may be called its own, the fop of the modern English stage. In general, our comedy had mirrored the manners of the class it addressed with unprecedented ease and faithfulness; and while more abundantly than conscientiously availing itself of the aid of both foreign and native sources, had not owed to them the main elements of its dramatic effectiveness. Not wholly avoiding the danger of sacrificing distinction of character to brilliancy of diction, it had steadily progressed in the elaboration of its form—prose dialogue. If the comic prose of Dryden surpasses that of his earlier contemporaries, he had in this respect been

[1] See Kelly's *False Delicacy*, *ad fin.*

[2] Manilius of Menander's comedy, quoted by Donaldson, *Theatre of the Greeks*, p. 201.

in his turn outshone by Congreve. Other names need not be mentioned to show that the dialogue of English comedy had thus been perfected to a degree which its predecessors had not reached, and which none of its successors have surpassed. The prose form had been made a permanent one in our comic drama, whence (to the indignation of Dr. Johnson) it was even to encroach upon the domain of her serious sister; and it was to the efforts of the comic drama that the prose of Addison and Steele and of our great novelists themselves owed its facility, its variety, and its power of expressing with spontaneous readiness the rapid play of wit and the subtler as well as the broader touches of humour.

Comedy and the novel.

Conclusion.

The history of the English drama in the period of which this chapter has treated illustrates the truth that there are two forces which no dramatic literature can neglect with impunity—the national genius and the laws of morality. Because, in obedience to the dictates of fashion and to artificial and arbitrary canons of literary taste, English tragedy sought to abandon the paths which the national genius had marked out for her, this period witnessed her decay — a decay followed by her all but absolute extinction as a living literary form. Because, to suit the vicious licence of their public, the contemporary comic dramatists bade defiance to the order which they well knew to be necessary for the moral government of human society, their productions have failed to hold an honourable place in our national literature. What was designed to attract, has ended by repelling; and works of talent and even of genius are all but consigned to oblivion by the judgment of posterity, on account of the very features which were intended to ensure an immediate success.

Of all forms of literary art the drama can least reckon without its responsibilities. So long as it remains true to these, it need fear neither adversary nor rival.

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